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JUVENILIA



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BEING A SECOND SERIES OF

ESSAYS ON

SUNDRY ÆSTHETICAL QUESTIONS

BY

VERNON LEE

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THE IMMORTALITY OF THE MAESTRO GALUPPI.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE MAESTRO GALUPPI.

IN the month of August seventeen hundred and seventy, Baldassare Galuppi, surnamed *Il Buranello*, chapelmaster of St. Marks, director of the music school of the *Incurabili*, with thirty odd years of glory around him, ushered the enthusiastic Dr. Burney into his little study, and, pointing to the desk and spinette, said modestly, "This is where I dirty paper."

We can imagine the laughter, beatifically sonorous, of the English enthusiast; the laughter also, somewhat less beatific and sonorous, of the Venetian admirers, who had probably heard that modest little joke many

times and oft; the smile of that good and illustrious little old man, the grand bows sweeping the floor with the three-cornered hat, all those ceremonious antics which disappeared with the "Your slave, sir!" and similar politenesses which we know from Goldoni. We can see the whole little comedy of enthusiasm and modesty on the threshold of that writing-closet, with the spinette in the background, the furniture painted over with nosegays, and the window opening on the canal; the lilac and pea-green coats, and black gowns, and bob-wigs and pigtails; a little picture for Pietro Longhi.

Affectation, all this; little coquetries of a man accustomed to success, you will say. Likely enough. Still it would please me to believe that in those words of the good Galuppi, there had been a grain of sincerity. In that man, who felt himself growing old, and saw a lot of youngsters coming up

(Sacchini, for instance, Sarti and Paisiello, youngsters now, alas, forgotten by the oldest great-grandfather), in that man, I say, there might really have been a certain diffidence; or at least that suspicion which must come to old people, and ought to be chronic in the artists of the most ephemeral of all arts, that one day all those precious scores, now furtively fingered by enthusiasts prying about the writing-table and the spinette, may become, in the eyes of posterity, a mere heap of ruled paper, once white, now dirty, and fit only for the chandler's or the archive.

And bearing this in mind, I incline to believe that the Maestro Galuppi, who struck people as a modest and sincere little man, may really have entertained some doubts concerning his own immortality. In which case the Maestro Galuppi was decidedly mistaken. The gods, and more especially their earthly representatives, municipal councillors and mayors, are always friendly to genius, neither

do they allow it to be *drowned in the black waters of Lethe*, as people would have said in the days of Galuppi.

O genius, mysterious, perennial and supreme emanation of the divine; more powerful than ease, or pleasure, or vanity, or rapacity, or whatsoever baseness is nurtured in the human heart; genius which upraisest our soul more than virtue, and shakest it more than love, and draggest it along more irresistibly than beauty, making us soar up to heaven at the moment of kneeling on the earth; genius, thou also canst turn into children the most villainous sceptics; and turn into poets, poets of the great poetry which is not written nor printed but lived, the respectable creatures whose ideal consists in two thousand a year.

Of course we often attempt to deny it, as we would deny all loftier things, this despotic power of genius. But it is useless. Have I not seen and heard an ex-hotel-keeper, mayor of a small watering-place,

wax enthusiastic on hearing that Shelley had once spent two months in that place, and exclaim with childlike triumph—"Yes, we'll find out that house! we'll find it out; and we'll put up a marble slab with the inscription—Here lived and wrote the illustrious So-and-so"?

The crowd of half-naked raggamuffins, after having dogged us along the quays and across the square of Burano, rushes in after the gondola, which seeks vainly with the strength of both oars, to emerge from that shallow, greenish, slimy water, paved with potsherds, and now pullulating with those little human frogs, brown, yellow-headed, with their formidable glancing of white teeth and shrill vociferations—"Paron, Paron, ghe no me lasa una pa' anca." A handful of coppers whips across the water, and all those heads duck, with a simultaneous yell. The gondolier on the stern bows himself outward, leaning with all his

might on the oar; and the gondola, once out of the shallow, glides quickly across the violet wavelets of the lagoon.

Our eyes remain fixed on the island, smaller with every stroke of the oars, but, owing to that curious autumnal limpidity of the lagoons, not yet dimmed by the distance. The light, reflected by the shining mirror of water, strikes vividly upon the white or pink plaster of the battered houses, the orange of the tiles, the exquisite rose colour of the belfry that seems almost to sway, like the stalk of a flower, in the blue of the sky. The red and the white of the walls and brickwork, even that transparent pale blueness of sky, acquire in that light I know not what feathery, flaky, powdery look of being immaterial and unreal; as if those houses, those cupolas and belfries, those tall urn-shaped chimneys, were an intangible pastel, so much whitish and lilacky dust upon pink drawing-paper, rather than solid things

of this solid world; so much so that the image mirrored in the lagoon seems more concrete than the real houses and real churches under the real sky.

Across the water there comes from Burano the sound of bells, the braying of the band in the principal square. For there are grand doings at Burano, and the fishing smacks, with their tawny sails furled and their brown nets hung out in the sun, are moored side by side in the little port, with no one to heed them save the usual cur barking all day and all night. At the doors of the black kitchens, where brass and copper trenchers and pails shine out in the gloom, are seated the old women, sibyls or fates for Michelangelo, and the old fishermen wearing the scarlet condottiere's cap of the Renaissance, wrinkled and furrowed living terra-cottas and bronzes enough to make Donatello and Pollajolo gnash their teeth for envy. The old folk are surrounded by swarming little ones,

beautiful creatures, more than half-naked, rolling about with the dogs and cats in the heaps of broken crockery, of tomato skins and pumpkin shells which form spots of vivid colour (and alas, of vivid stench) at the corners of the black lanes and on the steps of the dull green canals. While on the quays and in the square there moves the compact crowd of black or auburn heads of hair with hat on one side; of flowered cotton frocks pulled up to show the red stocking and the black clog, of veils and kerchiefs which hide, only the better to display, blond waves of hair and dark eyes; of red fans held up by sunburnt hands; with here and there the tricolour plumes of the carabineers. And above it all, red and green spots upon the white of the houses, the blue of the sky, are the flags flying from the windows, the lanterns strung up for the illumination. The bells jangle: the band brays. The crowd shuffles, jostles, laughs, and swears;

the vendors of fresh water and fried pumpkin, of candies spitted on wooden skewers, yell the praise of their wares. At the end of the square is a house with an extra amount of flags and lanterns, where gentlemen in tall hats are speechifying in good Italian, which nobody understands. The crowd laughs and swears; the band plays the duet of *Ruy Blas*, the potpourri of *Aïda*, and the royal march; the bells jangle louder than ever from the red belfry. The festivities are a grand success. Capital speeches have been made; a capital banquet will be given, with capital toasts; telegrams will be sent out in all directions —to Venice, to Rome, to the Minister of Public Instruction, to the Maestro Verdi, to everybody and anybody.

And all this fuss merely to commemorate the fact that a hundred and eighty years ago "there saw the light"—as the biographies have it—"in Burano, an humble island of the lagoon," a certain man called Baldassare Galuppi.

After this would you have me believe that immortality is not always the reward of genius?

Have you ever thought over the fate of forgotten melodies?

Our mind, if we attempt, proves unable to conceive of all those thousands and thousands of combinations of notes which were heard once upon a time, and are now heard no longer. Gone, disappeared. And whither? Vanished totally, like the sunset redness of yesterday, or last year's roses. The roses return, and so does the reddening sunset; but these other things, that were as lovely as they, do not. They have ceased to exist along with the recollection of the men and women in whose mind they had their sole real existence. The thought is strange and difficult to grasp. Yet there is something stranger still, and more difficult for our weak imagination to realize. It is the thought of all the minds

in which those melodies were once re-echoed; of all the hearts which, swept by them, shivered with pleasure or pain; of all that life, in short, which is now dead; of that present which has become the past, and by whose side, even while we are listening to the songs of to-day, there noiselessly takes its place this present of our own, becoming itself the past. The other arts, architecture, painting, sculpture, remain; besides they are always, so to speak, external to our life. Music alone exists absolutely in us who listen; nay, it has no existence apart from ours; and hence it is that music, like ourselves, must die.

That gallows-bird Villon, perhaps the first man to understand a certain kind of modern sentiment, wrote, as you know, an immortal ballad, in which he asked what had become of the famous women, the great empresses, and courtesans, and saints of former days, the ballad of dead ladies, whose melancholy refrain is an unanswer-

able question, "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"

As to me, I have often thought, that were I poet I would write a ballad sadder, sweeter, and more sceptical even than Villon's, which I should call the ballad or dead tunes.

Let your thoughts rest on it for a moment. There are two airs, for instance, neither of which a hundred years old, yet how forgotten: Cimarosa's *Quelle Pupille Tenere* and *Di Tanti Palpiti* in Rossini's Tancred; pieces once sung and whistled in every house and street through the length and breadth of Italy. Think what is meant by these pieces having once been familiar on all lips and in all ears, while now there is not one person in a thousand that knows their tune; in the case of Cimarosa's song, not one in a hundred thousand, since it has not had the luck, like *Di Tanti Palpiti*, of turning into a

singing exercise for young ladies with a contralto voice. It means not only the death of the melodies themselves, of so much beauty, individuality, pleasure; but the death also of so many men and women who knew and loved those songs; the total severing of all tradition between ourselves and them. And thinking on this, I cannot but feel a great pathos about those two airs which have in them nothing pathetic. In those sighing horns of *Tancred* (before the famous phrase "mi rivedrai, ti rivedrò"), in those shrilling trumpets that accompany the song of Cimarosa, there is for me a whole peal of Requiem bells. Yet these songs are but two; behind, around them, how many forgotten songs? thousands and thousands; their ranks to be swelled by the melodies alive to-day. And thus on till the consummation of centuries.

I am haunted by this thought, returning

at sunset from those centenary festivities in honour of Galuppi, at which not a bar of Galuppi's music was to be heard. A melancholy fact? Nay, rather one to laugh about: the thing is too comic to have the dignity of sadness.

Immortality: well, if he wanted immortality, that good man of the eighteenth century, why he has got it. A commemorative slab was stuck on to his house to-day.

The sun has set behind a bank of ashy mist without any sunset glory. Burano is many miles behind us; and in front, grey upon the greyness of the waters, rises the faint profile of Venice, with its long serpentine lines of posts in the lagoon. All is grey; the water, the sky, the distant city, the yet more distant hills. But little by little there mingles with that greyness, in long cloud filaments in the sky, in wide patches like rose leaves on the water, a pale, palest rosiness. It is the colour of the dead melodies.

And while my eyes wander over the lagoon where the rose colour dies away in the grey, there sings in my memory a certain phrase of melody of exquisite beauty; and that phrase is part of Buranello's setting of the words, "Se cerca, se dice." A melody found in a dusty portfolio in an archive, known therefore, perhaps, only by me. The thought is curious. Is it sad? Sad; but not without a certain something that pleases. Yes; I admit it: I am better pleased that this air should not be known to the good people at the festivities of Burano, nor to others. I alone know it. And I let it sing through my memory, while watching the faded rose colour that dies in the greyness of the sky and the greyness of the lagoon; the côlour, as I said, of the forgotten songs.

PERIGOT:

RANDOM NOTES ON THE DRAMATIC AND UNDRAMATIC.

PERIGOT:

RANDOM NOTES ON THE DRAMATIC AND UNDRAMATIC.

I.

In a recent article on Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess," we were told by a lady well versed in pastoral literature, and, moreover, connected in a very close and singular way with the pastoral world, that the shepherd Perigot was certainly a small peasant proprietor. While gratefully acknowledging, as a disciple of the late Stuart Mill, the importance of this testimony in favour of small farming; and while bowing before Lady Archibald Campbell's theoretical studies and personal experience in such

matters, I feel bound to state that I disagree entirely with her views. And I can explain the divergence in our opinions upon this subject only by the fact that the lady in question could not have had, for obvious reasons, the very great advantage, upon which I rest my claims to a theory, of being among the audience at the performance of Fletcher's pastoral comedy last summer in Coombe Park.

I deny, therefore, utterly and categorically, that the shepherd Perigot is, or ever has been, a small peasant proprietor; indeed, I resent that supposition as an offence of *lèse*—it is rather difficult to find the word—well, of *lèse-Perigot*, which is the same as saying an offence of *lèse*-fancy. For Perigot, I repeat, never has been a small peasant proprietor. Allow me to tell you something about him. Perigot is a prince, a prince of royal lineage more ancient than any other (of the dim ancestry of Khan Kubla, perhaps), sprung in directest line

from some Greek god showering and shimmering down in a golden fountain, or sailing majestic with shining white wings and snake-like erect head among the reeds and water-lilies. Perigot is a prince who, owing to some frightening dream or some lowly love affair, or perhaps merely because the thyme and marigolds of the hill-side, the shadow of the plane trees by the river, are pleasanter than the pillared palace chambers, possesses a flock which browse all day while he makes songs, as the Tuscan shepherds do even nowadays, with the names of flowers and herbs and the name of his sweetheart. Perigot is a prince; he has golden fringes to his green tunic, and a silver fillet round his blond hair; he may, at any moment, lay aside the fleece he wears on his shoulders, the shepherd's staff and pipe, in order to leap, with silver greaves and high-crested helmet, into his chariot with the golden spokes; or to mount upon his horse with the ivory

saddle and the long cloth of gold cover, a tame lynx in leash and a falcon on his wrist. For there is this of strangeness in Perigot, that, being so very, very young, he is also so very, very old. Paris of Troy was his elder brother; and his younger brother is the dear little king from the East, fair and smooth, with the long narrow eyes and long narrow smile, whose pomegranate embroidered mantle was unbuckled from his shoulders, and his golden spurs unstrapped, and his big sword held by a negro page, that he might kneel and proffer the incense and myrrh without frightening the little child in the stable at Bethlehem. Perigot is still without even the first faint callowness of lip or chin; yet he is older by far than the oldest greybeard. He has flown with the winged sandals of Perseus over the blue seas and white cities of Greece; he has ridden with Oberon's horn by his ride through the mysterious pine woods, along the strangely winding

rivers of the kingdom of the Grail King; he disappeared out of Antiquity as the boy Hylas whom the green-haired nymphs dragged beneath the river bed; and he reappeared in the Middle Ages as the Provençal knight Aucassin, "Aucassin li Biax, li Blons, li Gentil, li Amoureux." He has appeared again in later times, a boy or a girl? A girl disguised as a boy, or a boy disguised as a girl? as Richardet in the clothes of his sister Bradamante, as Viola in the dress of her brother Sebastian; showing himself, all the while, to country folk, old women and children, as the third son who cut off the Ogre's head, who kissed the dreadful Snake-lady, who broke off the bough of the Apples That Sang, and filled his flask with the Water That Danced. And once more—the last time, alas! we may fear—he has shown himself in our own days, on the stage of turf and cut grass, between the side scenes of rustling elms, of the pastoral theatre at Coombe.

He, undoubtedly he, among the crowd of graceful little masquerade figures, girls and youths copied from Alma Tadema or Albert Moore, hurrying with a sort of childish charm through Fletcher's big-mouthed verses; running in and out of the bushes like children playing at hide-and-seek, mottling the green distances of the forest glades with bright spots of yellow and lilac and blue garments, like a glorified school treat, and joining hands and dancing round the shrine of Pan, like the dear little people in Kate Greenaway's toy-books. Among this delightful, very visibly got up, very visibly modern troop of shepherds and shepherdesses, which crowded beneath the elms at Coombe, Perigot appeared, wholly different from all the rest, a reality in his thorough unrealness, no part of the masquerade. Unmistakable from the moment that he descended from his bullock wain (by-the-way the bullocks wore pony harnesses, probably unknown

in Arcadia), among the acclamations of the pastoral folk, to the moment when the curtain closed upon him standing by his shepherdess; unmistakable every time that he came forward, like a Botticelli allegoric youth, with vague wide-opened eyes and vague distant smile; every time that he walked slowly away, tall, slender, with the charming line of slightly bowed head and shoulders; unmistakable by virtue of that strange, half-feminine, half-boyish charm, that far-fetched, exotic, almost artificial grace which belongs to all creatures who have come out of Antiquity and lived through the Middle Ages; that strange and subtle quality of being an unreality and an enigma. Perigot himself, undoubtedly, come back to the world, re-embodied to play his own part among a troop of amateur shepherds and shepherdesses, as Wilhelm Meister half imagined that the real ghost of King Hamlet might come back to play his part by the side of Aurelia and Serlo and Philine. Was

it wise? Was it judicious of this Prince of Fairyland and Shepherddom, this brother of Paris and of the King from the East, this creature who had been Hylas and Aucassin, this boy thousands of years old, to give way to the temptation of re-incarnating once more? I fear not; I fear very much that it was foolish: for has not a lady very learned in pastoral lore, and who, of all people, might most have suspected this curious avatar mystery that was going on, declared, in print, that Perigot was a small peasant proprietor? After that, let the gods never re-incarnate again, nor the fairy princes.

II.

The incarnation of the unreal is not for our age of realism; of realism to a far greater extent even than we are generally apt to think. For realism has been steadily growing for the last two hundred years.

The last two hundred? The last three or four—nay, perhaps the last four thousand years. I take the word realism in the sense neither of Ruskin nor of Zola, as connected neither with humble love of nature nor with a hankering after filthy things. By realism I mean simply the observation of things as they are, the familiarity with their aspect, physical and intellectual, and the consequent faculty of reproducing them with approximate fidelity. And when I say that realism has been growing in the last two, three, four hundred, or four thousand years, I simply mean that the longer mankind has been in the world, the better acquainted does mankind become with the world's contents; passing, in its various stages of familiarity, from the observation of such details as it knows, to the observation of such further details as it does not know. For just as children learn but gradually to group their sensations, to recognize combinations of such sensations

and to perceive form, distance, position, and cause and effect, so mankind also learns but slowly the aspect of outer things, the nature of inner ones, the possibilities and impossibilities of the universe. And this is a process which, with the partial interruption due to loss of time and accumulated material in what we call the Middle Ages, has been steadily going on. We must not be misled by the fact that this realistic tendency, this gradual familiarity with things, has frequently shifted its ground. The Greeks of the days of Phidias indubitably possessed a familiarity with the line and boss of the human figure, a degree of realization in such matters, which was not increased, but rather diminished in after times; but the Greeks were unfamiliar with the medium, all that falls under the head of colour, light, and perspective, in which this human figure exists. They saw Nature, as distinguished from man, very vaguely and superficially, as we see a country in which we find our-

selves for the first time, lacking interest in it and unable to reproduce any very clear notion thereof. Thus, in the matter of background, colour, light and shade, atmosphere and perspective, in what constitutes the peculiar field of the painter as distinguished from the sculptor, an enormous realistic movement took place throughout the Middle Ages, vague and idealistic as we are apt to conceive them. Similarly, we think of the century and a half that lies between Milton and Cowper as a century of unfamiliarity with Nature, of what, in our aversion for the stereotyped phrases about "nodding groves," "hoary mountains," and similar Grub Street descriptions of scenery, we call conventionalism. Yet during that century and a half a vast progress was achieved in the direction of realization of the inner life of men and women —nay, in some measure, even of their outer life; Defoe, Addison, Richardson, Fielding, Madame de Lafayette, and the

Abbé Prévost are the contemporaries of Dryden, Pope, Thomson, and those various French rhymsters who sang of "*des ris et des jeux folâtres, des appas et des graces*," but could not tell a beech from a chestnut. Thus, I maintain, there has constantly been, and there inevitably could only be, an increase of familiarity—that is to say, of the desire and power of realizing the existing—in some portion of man's relations with himself or with external things.

To return to my simile of the child, all the literature of past ages gives us, in some extraordinary blindness of the humanly possible, in some astonishing change of character or inconceivable obtuseness, the equivalent of that want of perception of what is and what is not, which makes the child try to sweep the moon out of the sky with a broom. Thus Oliver, in "As you Like It," could not have suddenly turned from an utter scoundrel into a fit husband for Celia; nor could Olivia, in "Twelfth

Night," have instantly married off an unknown brother of the person she was in love with, on discovering that person to be a woman. Such things are impossible, due to absolute carelessness, want of habit of realizing situations; they are as utterly silly and childish as to stick three rosebuds and a box sprig into the ground and call the arrangement a garden. But I shall have to speak again, a little later, of similar peculiarities of the Shakspearian stage.

Be this as it may, we who are the latest comers have inherited all these various powers of seeing things as they are, and reproducing them faithfully; and to this inheritance of manifold realisms we people of the nineteenth century have added all the more liberally, because we have had to spontaneously begin realizing in no one single category of literature or art. Hence we have surrounded ourselves with what has never existed before—a complete circle of realism: in painting, in whatever there

still is of vital belonging to sculpture, even in poetry; above all, in that which is our own special form of art, the novel. And thus our stage, also, has become absolutely realistic.

I am not speaking merely of the extraordinary fidelity to reality in dress and scenery, which would have amazed our grandfathers, to whom it seemed quite proper that conspiracies should be discussed in the tyrant's ante-chamber, and that Greeks and Romans, Crusaders and Turks, should all appear with the same curly wigs, knee-breeches, corslets, and lappets. The whole spirit of the drama has become realistic. The play in verse has been completely defeated by the play in prose; the play dealing with former times has cleared off before the play dealing with our own days; and, on the rare occasion when the past is put upon the stage, no effort is spared to realize it in every detail—to turn it in a fashion into the present. Above all, the art

of acting has become merely the art of reproducing reality. In the account left to us of actors and actresses of former days, from Betterton to Talma, what strikes us, and what evidently struck contemporary audiences, was the pathos and passion with which certain capital passages were delivered. The excellence of the actor depended upon his power of exciting the audience at a given moment; the stories of Lekain and Adrienne Lecouvreur, even of the actors mentioned in Lessing's "Dramaturgie," clearly show this to have been the case; even if the structure of the plays elaborately worked up to certain dramatic points, and all the rest of the business left rather vague and conventional, did not force upon us the conclusion that complete realization of a situation, a scene or a person, absolute and uniform life-likeness, is a very modern conception indeed. In the middle of the last century, Lessing, the most realistic playwright and dramatic critic of his day, commended the

actor who performed his Odoardo Gallotti for picking nervously at the feathers in his hat while listening to the recital of Emilia's shame. Nowadays there is not a third-rate provincial actor, nay, scarcely an amateur, who would not have recourse to devices like this one, which a hundred years ago seemed little less than a stroke of genius. Even upon the opera stage it has become unusual for one performer to look on quietly without any sign of interest, while another is detailing his feelings in an air; and even in an Italian serious opera—that is to say, in the most idiotically undramatic drama of our time—one can notice gestures, that, for instance, of seizing hold of a woman's two hands, and then hurling her aside, which would probably have created a tremendous sensation if risked by Talma. The text is studied—even the most florid passages like Queen Mab and some of Hamlet's speeches—so as to extract from every word whatever indication of gesture or in-

tonation it might possibly contain, whatever dramatic essence the author failed to put in, and the critics insist upon putting in for him. Everything has to be made real, and hence the difficulty which a large amount of Shakspeare evidently presents to men like Salvini or Irving: they insist upon clearing up points which Shakspeare was evidently satisfied with overlooking; upon rendering life-like what the great poet had grandly left lifeless. Realization, that is the aim and end of our drama; and it has certainly been attained in the most marvellous manner.

I would have you try and recall, as vividly as you may, certain scenes of Sarah Bernhardt's, in order to appreciate what the art of realization has risen—or, may I say? has sunk to. Take for instance, "Féodora." Féodora is not merely a passionate, vindictive, tender, childlike, capricious, scatterbrained, and terrible woman—an extraordinary mixture of heterogeneous and conflicting qualities; but she is a woman

with a definite nationality, a definite temperament, a definite bodily and mental constitution, a Russian and a nervous subject, fit to be studied equally by the moralist, the ethnographer, and the physiologist; and she is not merely the typical Russian and the typical nervous subject, but an individual impossible to mistake or to forget. Try and grasp her as a whole; and then try and call up in your mind any one of her scenes, any one moment of her action or speech: the love-scene, in which she detains the man she has betrayed, the scene in which she implores the forgiveness of the man she has dishonoured. See, in your imagination, her silhouette as she clings to her lover's knees, as she drags him through the door, the mere outline of her face, her hands, at a given moment; or hear with your fancy one sentence in the low, hot, rapid voice, one cry, one sob. Revive the feelings which were yours in the presence of those real convulsions and gaspings of love and

rage and grief; and you will recognize, if you be neither dull nor callous, that they are the feelings which would have arisen if this stage play had been a reality—feelings of half-sickened interest, of half-degraded sympathy. The falling of the curtain did, indeed, overwhelm all this in the manifold realities of your own life; did, indeed, divert you to other feelings. But as long as it lasted, this stage-play was a reality; and a reality also was the sense of debasing shame at having seen what our nature forbids us to look at: the utter nakedness and prostration of a human soul.

III.

It is horrible, such realism as this, and it is wrong. The instinct within us is perfectly correct, which makes us vaguely resent such things as an insult, almost an outrage, done to our whole better nature. Except where we can diminish its horror

(and in this case our attention is concentrated not on the evil but on our efforts to master it), it is bad, it is degrading for us to see too deep into the spiritual miseries of others, as it is to see too close into their physical ones. Is it because we all of us have moments which had better not recur twice, and because the fact of such moments being witnessed by others connects them more closely with ourselves, makes them more difficult to emerge from, that we have an instinct of hiding from sight our violent and momentary feelings? Is it that each separate soul requires a degree of isolation —requires to be separated from others when it is entirely swallowed up in its own self? I cannot venture to decide; I can only point out the fact that such an instinct exists strongly in all civilized creatures; and that, as I have said, we feel abashed and outraged when we are forced to intrude upon the moral privacy of others, to witness what we would not wish to show, even

as we feel abashed and outraged when our own moral privacy is invaded. I think, on the whole, that this curious instinct may be partly explained by not two creatures being alike, and by the consequent fact that we are injured morally by having the strain of another's misery put upon us roughly, without reference to our different powers and methods of bearing such strains. We can be useful only so long as we are true to ourselves; we must pick up our burden, so much of it as we can bear, and carry it according to the strength and shape of our spiritual shoulders; it must not be rudely hurled at us like a load of stones discharged from a cart.

But how, then, of the novel; and why should that be legitimate in a printed book which is not to be legitimate in an acted play? For the novel is essentially that form of art which brings us in contact with other folks' innermost soul. The explanation, to my mind, lies exactly in the dif-

ference between the thing which is read and the thing which is actually witnessed. In the case of the play the actor does the realizing, and to his realizing we are forced to submit. In the novel this realization is left in great measure to ourselves. In reading a book we usually realize only so much as we can bear; each reader, in point of fact, selecting automatically that which shall most impress him; or rather, details gravitating to the mind, flying to it like needles to a magnet, according as there exists a natural affinity between them and it. In reading, therefore, it is rare that violence is done to our feelings, to our preference and powers of understanding and enduring what is shown. We respond to the author's suggestion, we do one-half of the work, and do it, inevitably, in the way least painful to ourselves. Moreover, in this intellectual representation, our mind is appealed to, not our nerves; and our mind grasps, welds into an harmonious whole,

healthy and endurable, a whole state of feeling or a whole character, instead of having merely the outer expression thereof hurled violently at us. With this explanation is connected the fact that, in real life, we turn away with a feeling of decorum from the actual visible moment of agony, when that agony cannot be diminished by our aid, when it is a mere spectacle. The sobs and screams of even the holiest grief, sicken, unless we can abate them, even like physical loathsomeness; although we sympathize with the grief itself, and although we should perhaps, admire and even feel grateful for witnessing it, if we saw it as a mere feeling, making its way through self-command: in the latter case we are in the presence of a human being, in the former in the presence of a mere animal.

As long as what impresses us is the mere momentary physical expression, we cannot grasp the whole feeling and situation, we can

neither understand nor sympathize. While reading "Othello" our powers of understanding and sympathizing are constantly being appealed to: we master the situation, the miserable meeting of this man and this woman, each noble, but each destined to be the other's victim; we see where the mischief lies, we feel where we could ourselves have helped. The mere catastrophe, the few minutes of Desdemona's murder, are the least thing; the tragedy has been in Othello's soul, and is virtually over by this time. It is different in Salvini's representation. Here the murder is the chief interest—all works up towards it. We go away morally bruised and sickened by this sight, indifferent to all else. Comprehension, sympathy, all are swept away by sheer horror. The spiritual physiognomy of the persons is crowded out of our mind by the mere visible appearance of Othello, rushing and leaping, yelling that strange yell which is half bay, half sob, sobbing and panting,

dragging away Desdemona by the arm and the hair, peering from out of the bed-curtains in the midst of his half-finished work. That face among the curtains of the bed; that long, oval Tartar face, smooth and shining, with only an ill-growth of black bristles, with its distended veins and fearful white rolling eyes, a blood-like reflection thrown up to it by the red night-dress, the red curtains—that face stains itself indelibly into our imagination, and all else of the play, all the rest of the action, all the poetry of Shakspeare, pales and vanishes by its side.

IV.

But Salvini is a great, a very great actor, one of the very greatest, in scenes like this one, that has ever lived. Undoubtedly. But are the plays of Shakspeare written for great actors? Is the highest expression of modern art fit to accompany the highest

expression of an art which, after all, was the product of nearly three centuries ago? The question may be reduced into a nutshell by asking whether the art of Shakspeare is realistic in the same sense as is the art of Salvini?

And, in the first place, can we of the end of the nineteenth century fairly judge what Shakspeare's art really is? In order to do so we must, so far as we can, remove the network of thoughts and feeling with which each succeeding generation of critics, of actors, and of readers have overlaid the original work. I sometimes doubt whether, even after all our trouble, we could see the real Shakspeare, so utterly have we corrupted the text of what he represents to our soul. The many scholars and societies who labour to give us back the original word and meaning of what he wrote are, in reality, defeating their own object: every explanation is virtually an interpolation, an alteration; and Shakspeare's plays are by

this time one mass of such interpolations and alterations. A book like that of Gervinus, for instance, is to my mind a perfect pest; and had Gervinus been a man of greater powers, it would have been a still greater one, if possible.

The besetting sin of all Shakspeare criticism, of all criticism, nay, of all intellectual manipulation whatsoever, is the mania for reducing a heterogeneous thing to a very simple formula. As our novelists seek to reduce the complexities of human character to one definable dominant character, so our critics seek to reduce the complexities of art to one very definable mission; whence arises that, as every definition means a number of omissions, as many definitions almost are possible as there are critics. The extraordinary insight into character which Shakspeare undoubtedly possessed, and his fondness for generalizing on questions of feeling and conduct—peculiarities, by the way, which were shared by his great

contemporaries, Webster and Ford and Beaumont and Fletcher, nay, even Marston and Heywood — these psychological elements in Shakspeare, which are the elements also most akin to our modern mind, have misled us into imagining that the art of Shakspeare is deliberately, consistently, nay, almost exclusively, psychological. As a matter of fact, I am inclined to think that pyschology is not the main object of Shakspeare's art, and that, if that art may be said to have any main object, it is merely to please by many and various means, of which the study of character is only one. The Shakspearian drama may, I think, be defined (since we can never escape the demon of definition) as the rough union of various artistic elements agreeable to his contemporaries into a whole which should give them the greatest aggregate of artistic pleasure; the exposition of some interesting action, spiced and garnished with every sort of extraneous thing, with high lyrism, buf-

foonery, wit, poetic fancy, obscenity, philosophy, and fashionable euphuism. The action is neither all-engrossing nor absolutely realized. The spectators take a considerable pleasure in the murder of the King, or the trial of the Merchant; but they are so far from absorbed by this situation that they can attend to and delight in all manner of irrelevancies. The actors strut on the stage, painted up for the parts, and gesticulating with a kind of general fitness, every now and then rising for a moment to close life-likeness; for the rest, gorgeously or quaintly attired in metaphorical word-brocades, or in freaked fool's motley, turning somersaults like a clown, and singing roulades like a prima donna. It sometimes happens, and in Shakspeare's greatest plays it happens often, that these conventional splendidly trapped stage-mimes have a moment of intense intuition, that they feel and understand, that a wonderfully pathetic intonation, an amazingly

characteristic gesture, suddenly interrupts the conventional strut and declamation—strut and declamation in no ridiculous or debasing sense of the words. They move, declaim, gesticulate, not with a view to realizing a situation, but with a view to pleasing the audience by a display of various splendid or comic elements. The action—except, perhaps, in "Othello," the play of Shakspeare's which is most modern, in the sense that Schiller is modern — is used mainly as a framework for this intellectual pageant, or opera in words. When it becomes interesting, riveting to the attention, this is usually an accidental result. The poet, for his part, is no more engrossed in the situation than is a composer in his libretto; he may recognize here and there a point suitable to some pathetic note, some terrible inflexion; but he goes on composing, here a buffo scene, here a bravura air, here again a piece of descriptive symphony, and so forth, without any of that

intense creative interest in characters and situations which we see in Schiller, or even, occasionally, in Racine—which we see in every trumpery modern novelist.

Shakspeare is not merely frequently indifferent to the possibility of a situation (as in the various sudden conversions of scoundrels, the cool interchanging of brides and bridegrooms, the cheerful acceptance of amazing discoveries), he is constantly violating all realism of detail. He constantly indulges in speeches which entirely disfigure a character and deaden a situation; he can no more resist a metaphorical or philosophical tirade in the midst of hurry and passion, than Rossini can resist a nice roulade in the midst of agony. There is in Shakspeare (if I may be permitted to continue my musical simile) much fine, free, natural recitative, with occasional intense poignancy of intonation; there is occasionally an instrumental bar or two of deeply imaginative suggestiveness, either

serene or ill-omened, like Banquo and Duncan's little conversation about the martlets, and the old man's story of Duncan's horses after the murder; but there is also an infinite amount of pure undramatic art, singing and fiddling for singing and fiddling's own sake. Macbeth's speech to the murderers can be compared only with a most intricate fugue, and I know of no composer who would have put a fugue in such a scene; compare with this metaphysical disquisition the rapid action of a much more lyrical and metaphysical poet, of Shelley in the similar scene in the "Cenci." Hamlet's speeches to the ghost constitute a grand aria as florid as any in "Semiramide;" the beautiful scene beginning "In such a night as this," in "The Merchant of Venice," is a perfect Mozartian duet between Jessica and Lorenzo, warbling at each other like Tamino and Pamina.

I think, therefore, that Shakspeare's art,

essentially pageant-like and decorative, and, if I may say so, operatic, accepted situations and characters only in a general way. I doubt whether, with the single exception of "Othello," Shakspeare was either a skilful conductor of action, like Calderon or Racine, or (in comedy) Goldoni, or a deliberate psychologist or reconstructor of character, like Schiller in "Wallenstein," or Goethe in "Tasso." He frequently realized character and situation with amazing power (as, with a lesser genius, did Webster), and his conceptions were nearly always coherent; but he troubled himself little about developing. People have seen in his conceptions every manner of thing that could not be there. Macbeth, Claudius, and the usurper in the "Tempest," are the typical tyrant, mere Kings of Clubs, not very much more individual than those on the playing-cards; they have a robe, a crown and armour, they are wicked and godless, and a little remorseful or cowardly every now and then; they

are very correctly trapped out in the correct conventional trappings of tyrants and usurpers. But it is absurd, I think, to seek in Shakspeare for a Philip II., an Ottavio Piccolomini, a President (in "Cabal and Love") like Schiller's, or a Francesco Cenci like Shelley's, let alone a Guido Franceschini. The man who could create so incarnate, so living a figure as any of these, who could momentarily quiver with the life of his creation, could surely never have put into its mouth the magnificent tirades which Shakspeare gave his tyrants, making them talk in the midst of action as Shelley scarcely allows his Prometheus to talk, bound in a cloud of lyrical inaction. A man like Schiller, for instance, would not have permitted himself such gross violations of possibility; or, rather, he would have been too completely wrapped up in his character's feelings to conceive anything else. That part of "Faust" which is really a play is much more realistic than almost

any play of Shakspeare's, although it has an intention far beyond any dramatic realism; Goethe never makes Faust, Gretchen, Valentine, Martha, or even Mephistopheles say things inconceivable in the given situation.

I do not believe that Hamlet, such as Shakspeare wrote him (as distinguished from Hamlet such as we read him) is as realistically conceived, as realistically carried out as Schiller's Don Carlos, much less as Goethe's Tasso; nor are Romeo and Juliet realized like Faust and Gretchen, Egmont and Clärchen, Max and Thekla. All that, I mean all that deliberate psychology, belonged to the period of literature for the closet; it could come only after Richardson and Rousseau; it required the sedentary, self-analyzing habits of novel-readers. The audience of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, who went to see murders and poisonings (we can judge of their requirements by the plays of Shaks-

peare's contemporaries as well as by his own), and to hear fine tirades and euphuisms, Baconian thoughts in Baconian-language, Rabelaisian jests in Rabelaisian jargon, and poetry more exquisite than any of Spenser or Sidney—such an audience, I say, could no more have followed the minute character-painting for which we give Shakspeare credit than they could have followed "Clarissa Harlowe" or "Wilhelm Meister." Perception, in all things, is a matter of practice; and we have been trained for two centuries (and at what a rate!) to understand Stendhal, Balzac, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. Give Shakspeare the "Wahlverwandschaften" to read, and see what he will make of it. Not very much more than Palestrina would make of one of Beethoven's symphonies.

Considering all this, I think that the spirit of modern Shakspearianism, among readers, critics, and actors, is quite false to Shakspeare himself, because true to the

traditions of our own times. We read the things which he never wrote; the things which we have learned from Schiller and Goethe, nay, even from the whimpering, semi-serious playwrights of the eighteenth century, even from such creatures as Kotzebue; above all, what we have learned from the endless array of novelists and memoir-writers, countless as the army of Xerxes. We recognize occasional intuition of individual character, and we try to discover in Shakspeare a homogeneous development thereof, and, naturally, the less we see, the more persuaded we become of the wondrous occult existence.

Now, what the reader merely imagines in a play, the actor can actually give. The great actor is not merely a creator who can produce a character out of nothing, a mere word — "tyrant" — "jealousy" — "remorse"—representing to his special genius a whole complicated series of looks and intonations. The great actor is, even more

than an artist, a reality, a human being, a certain arrangement of temperament and character; and, as such, his reality as a human being fills out even the most shapeless conventional stage-personage; moves within it, and gives it a definite and real individuality. In Othello there is Salvini; in Féodora there is Sarah Bernhardt; and if Othello and Féodora were both of them perfectly unreal, Salvini and Sarah Bernhardt would be none the less real for that. This modern type of great actor (born long after Shakspeare's day in the sedentary French drama of the seventeenth century, and developed under the pressure of metaphysicians and novelists throughout the eighteenth century) can make out of Shakspeare's indications things far more complex and real than Shakspeare would ever have dreamed of. Why? Because he could make something complex and real without any such indications at all. Mrs. Siddons' Lady Macbeth (as noted down by

George Bell during the representations) is her creation, not Shakspeare's. The text by no means implies all the subtle shades which she gives. Nay more, the text often flies in the face of her conception of any consistently realistic creation, in innumerable lyric passages. And the proof thereof is the difficulty felt by all great modern actors as to the mode of treating these merely decorative speeches; how give reality to that which is not intended to be real? As, in an opera, a clever singer may act very finely during certain dramatic airs and recitatives and concerted pieces, but has nothing for it but to stand more or less foolishly while performing florid passages; so also an actor, in Shakespeare's day, may have given great power, say, to Richard III.'s scene with Ann, may have acted at her with perfect realism, but must certainly have delivered Richard's soliloquy to the pit merely as what it is, a magnificent piece of rhetorical writing.

In short, I return to my original remark that Shakspeare was not our contemporary, nor even the contemporary of Schiller and Goethe; that his audience had not read the "Comédie Humaine," "Madame Bovary," and "Middlemarch;" that his actors were neither Salvini nor Irving nor Sarah Bernhardt; and that his art is not the pure psychological drama of our realistic days, but a splendid combination of dramatic, philosophic, descriptive, and lyric elements; a great and magnificent pageant of the intellect and fancy.

V.

A thing, therefore, no longer suited to our day? Not so. For with the daily increase of realism has gone the daily increase of the desire for the unreal. Familiarity with things as they are, which is realism, has provoked in us a passionate

craving for things as they are not. We have learned to appreciate the imaginative as the dwellers in a huge city appreciate the country; as the sedentary man of business or scholar appreciates physical exercise; as we matter-of-fact people of a humdrum present appreciate the incoherence, the strangeness of the past. The whole great movement of pre-Raphaelitism is there to prove it; we want Burne Jones because we have got Manet and Raffaelli: Morris and his earthly Paradise because we have got George Eliot and the whole turn-out of "Middlemarch." And this is but right. The real would crush us if we could not take refuge in the regions where the real never enters; the recognition of the fatal necessity of so much that runs counter to our instincts and aspirations would make us utterly wretched if we could not, at pleasure, give ourselves in imagination all those things which are refused by reality. Hence it is, that of all people, we realists of the

nineteenth century are, perhaps, the most in need of imaginative art, in want of the great pageant master, Shakspeare, not reduced to the proportions of a disciple of Sardou.

And hence it is that we require, as well as the dramatic, the undramatic ; as well as the ugly, the beautiful ; as well as what exists, that which has never existed. Hence it is (returning to the starting-point of my rambling discourse) that we absolutely require the return of the old gods to earth, or if not to earth, at least to our fancy. And it is for this reason, doubtless, that there has come in our day a re-incarnation of that mysterious youth, without the faintest first callowness of lip or cheek, yet older than the oldest grey-beard, that brother of Paris of Troy, and of the youngest of the Three Kings, who disappeared from Antiquity as Hylas and reappeared in the Middle Ages as the Bel Aucassin ; and who has revisited the world

and our imagination among the side scenes of rustling elms of the pastoral stage at Coombe, exotic, enigmatic, exquisite, under the name of the Shepherd Perigot.

LOMBARD COLOUR STUDIES.

I.

THE LAST MONK AT THE CERTOSA OF PAVIA.

(BRIGHT RED, BRIGHT BLUE, BRIGHT GREEN.)

HE is the last surviving monk of the Certosa, and he is waiting (as he paces up and down the heated cloisters which do not warm his ice-cold feet, or kneels upon the damp-cold chapel flags which do not cool his burning body) for the fever, the enemy which has been besieging the great abbey these well-nigh five centuries, to make an end of him also.

It is the endless summer of the Lombard plain. The sun pours fire upon the big, empty courtyard, till the dry brown grass is burning to the touch. Fire upon the yellow marble (sunburnt by many such

summers) of the richly-carved church front, storey piled upon storey, garland upon garland, till the thin malignant sculptured heads of warriors and kings, Alexander, Cæsar, Scipio, Cocles crowned or filleted, become, as it were, the personifications of this malignant sun. The red-brick gables and pinnacles of shingled roof lie like flame against the sky of molten, flaming blue metal: and they tremble and undulate in its vaporous heat. The flowers and grass in the smaller cloister, half in the shadow of the belfry, are dead; the blue metal of the sky arches it over, and is felt like a white-hot iron held close to the skin, which does not touch, but burns; the sunshine lies on the burning red bricks like little pools of scarlet fire.

But outside, all around, spreads the soft, bright green grass of the irrigated meadows, damp and cool even now from the water which trickles incessantly in the little canals, under the thick green bushes,

everywhere; not a meadow without its clear brown brook. The white, shimmering trunks of the congregated poplars throw a deep, dark beam of shadow across the short, thick, bright green grass; while their thick tops, round clusters of shimmering leaves, green and white, sparkle and tremble and fan the blue sky. How green, cool, and refreshing such meadows under such heavens as these, by the side of all this mound of burning red brick! The brick is burning and red, making eyes and feet smart; and the meadows are cool and green, and balm to the parched skin and mouth. Yet death comes from those cool green meadows, and life lingers on within those burning red walls. For the green grass, the clear trickling water, are in league with the scalding blue sky; and their child, their fosterling, floating about with the wind among the hazel bushes and reeds, which bend over the streams, and among the rustling green tree tops, is the

fever. And from all sides, from every blade of juicy grass, from every trembling fresh leaf, it beleaguers those red sun-smitten walls, which rise up, with steaming and tremulous red belfries and domes and minarets, from the bright green meadows into the bright blue sky.

How long will that siege last? It has lasted, it would seem, near five hundred summers; among the pomp of carved marble and jasper and porphyry, and glittering gold and silver, among the pomp in which robed, silent monks assembling morning and evening in the sculptured choir stalls, pray for the soul of the great prince (his parricide scowl is repeated on pillar and medallion) who put them there; singing, among the incense clouds, the glory of Him who has bid the blue sky and the green grass beget the fever that burns and wastes them. And thus on for centuries, the blue sky and the green meadows have laid siege to the monastery.

And now there remains but one more man to exterminate. He paces, in his white robes, the cold dark church, the fever meanwhile burning his blood and his skin; and in the red cloisters, with their streams and pools of white sunlight, his teeth chatter and his feet strike like icicles upon the heated bricks. Meanwhile, from under the burnt brown grass of the cloister arises a faint, death-announcing, nauseousness of charnel; and the green glistening poplar heads nod and tremble over the red walls, in the tremulous blue glare of the sky.

II.

THE CAGE TOWER AT PIACENZA.
(PALE RED AND PALE BLUE.)

BELOW, all around, is the town; tortuous streets, stifling and sweltering, full of a jostling, yelling, quarrelling crowd of men and women and beasts: bestial and brutal,

eating and drinking, and filling the place with their filthiness and their noise. A grimy sliminess upon the walls, against which you brush; a black and nauseous ooze trickling between the rough round stones, and in every corner heaps of garbage and filth, round which the fat, slow flies buzz, while the gnats in swarms fill the sunbeam; a pushing and jostling of unwashed bodies, more stiflingly corporeal, fleshly, for heat, and crowd and weariness; and drunken brawl and obscene jest and angry oaths, coupling together God and dirt; no thought beyond the moment and the body. All squalid, stifling, murky, sweltering, and lewd down here.

And above, rising as if with gradual swiftness, as a visibly shooting flower-stem, the rose-pink square brick tower. Rising while our eyes follow it, above the stained walls, above the reefs and peaks and crags of roof and attic and chimney; above the deep red, scaly, shingly tiles of the church;

upwards. Upwards till it has against its red straight sides only the dark-blue distant hills bounding the plain; higher, till it touches only the blue of the lower sky; higher, till the pale rosiness of its brick, which has lost all body, and remained only colour, is surrounded by the pale milk-blue of the free upper sky.

Surrounding this pale pink stem of masonry (for it seems to touch nothing and nowhere) the blue whiteness of the heavens, the tremulous haze of light which seems to quiver and oscillate about it, to come and go in luminous tide-like waves, now lapping all round it, then quickly retreating, leaving it quite alone, isolated, in an unfathomable depth of blue air and white light. Below, the swallows circle, their white breasts shining in the sun; up, there is nothing save sun and air, light and life. And we look up in wistfulness and joy.

But upon the surface of the tower there is a spot, a shadow upon its luminous rose

brickwork, fretted and patterned like some delicate silken woof. From the topmost loophole is suspended a cage; iron grating above, iron grating below, iron grating all round. And in the cage is a man. They have brought him there in the morning, and will continue to do so on and on for days and months; chainless, free of arm and limb, free to crouch and turn as he will; a man, infamous in the world, whose punishment is to be here. The blue air circulates all round him, the white light streams down upon him, but the sun's fierce baking is cooled, washed away, by the eddying waves of air; neither heat nor cold is his punishment. It is the isolation, the blue air, the white light; the height, the height. The world below seems to suck him down, to drag him towards it, as the iron is dragged to the loadstone; but the bars of the cage restrain, thrust back. Oh, for the sickening delight of falling, of feeling one's self sink, the body going

down, clearing the air, free—but the bars hold him back. And he turns round and lies on his back, and looks up into the receding, palpitating, milk-white blueness; but the sky goes in and out, comes and goes like sucking lips, and it trembles with greed and pants with desire, and he feels it sucking him up, up, as the water is sucked by the sun out of the plants. But, between him and the blue heaven are the iron bars which restrain him, stop him at the moment of release only to let him be sucked up once more. And he turns on his side and, cowering, looks sidewards on the world below. The sunlit distant hills seem quite low; the high, sun-smitten, precipitous roofs are flat; the streets between them are like tortuous black brooks, the courts like deep black wells; the market-place crowded with people is a teeming moving mass of dark things. He looks down. Oh, that he could only hear those men whom he sees move, or hear more

than a mere hum; that he could sniff the hot, close, stenched-filled air; that he could know he was not cut off from the living! The crowd moves to and fro with its buzz of cries and clattering steps; it moves, divides, unites again like water on the sands. They have a fair to-day—they are selling their hemp, and wine, and cattle. They think of that and not of him. He was taken up there so long ago, and others have been in the cage before him; they have forgotten all about him; they do not even look up. And the man seizes the bars of the cage, and shaking them, yells with the rage of weariness. But no one hears him. The swallows circle below; the blue air palpitates around; the white sunshine trembles on the bricks of the town. The whitish-blue sky receives into itself the pale rosy stem of masonry which shoots up, penetrates into it like some living delicate thing. The cage, the prisoner are forgotten.

DON JUAN (CON STENTERELLO).

DON JUAN (CON STENTERELLO).

"OF course there was a real Don Juan," answered Don José, with that curt Spanish gravity which made one think of an Alcalde in one of Calderon's plays. He was leaning against the back of the box, or rather (for we had opened the door) against the wall of the narrow corridor, blowing long wreaths of smoke from under his big grey moustaches, and tempering with his cigarette the mingled smell of gas, of garlic, and of generations of bygone play-goers, which pervaded that little theatre sacred to one of the last of Italian masks, the Tuscan clown Stenterello. "Of course there was a real Don Juan;

that Tenorio who is buried at Seville, and whose tremendous chastisement we are about to witness; but there were others besides him, brilliant evil-doers who received miraculous warnings to change their ways. When I was a boy people used still to narrate the story of some of these minor Don Juans—that, for instance, of a certain Don Miguel de Mañara, a famous Lovelace, who happened one evening to meet his own funeral; and a similar one about a young gentleman of Madrid, an officer in King Philip V.'s bodyguard. But the strangest of all these stories, to my mind, is that of my fellow-citizen, Don Francisco Velasco——"

The curtain had fallen between the last act but one and the last. We had witnessed the violent abduction of Doña Anna and the pathetic death of the respectable Commander, father of that lady, villainously run through the body by Don Juan Tenorio. We had been horrified by the

shocking blasphemies of Don Juan in the cemetery, and the tremendous answer of the statue of the commander, "Pentiti Ribaldo!" ("Repent, villain!") echoed by Don Juan's servant, the poor silly clown Stenterello, vociferating the cry of the pipkin-sellers: "Pentolaio, Donne!" ("the pipkin-seller, women!"). And we had actually beheld (so genuine is the supernatural even in the twopenny theatre of Borgo Ognissanti) the white marble commander shaking with laughter on the top of his cardboard bronze charger, and showering upon the horrid blasphemer and his servant a rain of flour from his whitened face and drapery at every special piece of the clown's humour. Finally there had been the grand scene of the wicked libertine supping magnificently off a dish of salad and sausage, at a banqueting table adorned with a monumental wooden cruet-stand, while poor Stenterello, with his painted face and pigtail, ran about like a scared rabbit

before the ghost of the commander, tried to hide behind a straw-bottomed chair and under the table, and finally, wild with terror, plopped down upon the lap of the marble guest. After an universal roar of laughter, in recognition of the last words of the clown, "Sir, sir, he's gone and rolled down the staircase. Boum! Boum! he's gone and broken himself into a hundred pieces!" the audience began to rise, to stretch their stiffened arms and legs, to yawn and hum; while there resounded from behind the curtain the hammering which was to furnish an appropriate hell wherein to damn the unrepenting sinner. The pit was gradually emptied of spectators hurrying to drink their usual glass of coffee dregs and spirit, or to smoke the half cigar which they had extinguished on entering and carefully treasured in a breast pocket. There remained only a sprinkling of the types that you meet in every cheap little Italian theatre: the respectable little soldier, who

has got permission to play the horn in the orchestra; the Jewish pawnbroker, with the battered tall hat and Nineveh bull profile; the swell cad, like the Emperor Nero when he was down in the world, dressed in immense yellow and black checks, and staring solemnly at all the girls; the peasants come for a jaunt in the tram, sunburnt women, with bright kerchiefs on their heads, gathered round the young countryman buried in fox furs, and pretending to be perfectly at his ease in town, and not to have anything to do with all this womankind. And higher up, in the eighteenpenny boxes, sleepy or radiant faces of children; solemn and prim faces of footmen and housemaids, treated to the play by their masters. From the deserted pit rose a thick atmosphere of stale cigar and stale gas, and garlic and damp, to which were now added the acrid sulphuric fumes of the supernatural light which had accompanied the apparition of the Commander. In the midst of all this,

Don José's cigarette was as delicious as a sea breeze.

"Tell us the story of Don Francisco Velasco," begged the little English poetess (you remember, Carlo, how sillily she behaved, laughing like a baby and clapping her hands to burst her tiny gloves at every blank verse grandiosity of the Commander, and every idiotic pun of Stenterello's).

"Do tell it us, Don José," we all repeated. Don José slightly raised one thick eyebrow; he blew a great lilac smoke wreath from under his moustaches, and began his story, which he illustrated with his rapid, brusque, soberly dramatic Spanish gestures:

"I must explain that a few years ago I had to make some antiquarian researches in my native city of Granada. These researches led me one day into the hall of a religious confraternity, a kind of sacristy, panelled with cupboards and hung with old portraits. Among these was the likeness of a cavalier of the seventeenth century,

dressed in black, with the name painted on the frame: Francisco Velasco. This name brought to my mind a lot of childish impressions; I had heard it often from my nurses. 'Tell me,' I said to the beadle, 'wasn't he an awful good-for-nothing, that Francisco Velasco, and didn't something very extraordinary happen to him?' 'Yes, sir,' he answered, 'and it was that adventure which caused him to reform his life, so that he died in odour of sanctity, and a great benefactor of this confraternity,' and then he told me the following story:

"This Don Francisco Velasco was one of the prettiest gallants of Granada—noble, rich, handsome, witty, dare-devil, and, moreover, an admirable player on the guitar. He was much in request with the ladies, but not at all with their husbands; a terrible fellow, who feared neither God nor the Devil. One evening that he was strolling about in quest of adventures, and idly thrumming on his guitar, he saw a lady

leaning out at the balcony of an old mansion. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and Don Francisco was perfectly able to recognize in that lady one of the loveliest women in Granada, but with whom he had never succeeded in setting up a flirtation; nay, she seemed to him, leaning on the balustrade in that wonderful moonlight, more beautiful with a strange sort of beauty than he had ever thought her before. He stopped to look at her, and bowed. And this began a polite conversation. At last the lady invited Don Francisco to come in and have some supper in her company. Velasco did not wait to be asked twice. He found the house door open, and went up. The lady struck him as being even more beautiful seen from near than from far. She was dark, pale, very pale, with a something strange and even a trifle sinister in her loveliness, but perfectly adorable.

"They had a most agreeable supper; and afterwards, as the musical fame of Velasco

was universal in Granada, the lady begged him to play her something on his guitar. What with talking and making music, they sat up very late. Indeed, the dawn was whitening the sky, and from a neighbouring yard there rose the crowing of a cock.

"At this sound the lady trembled all over.

"'Go—leave the house immediately,' she cried; 'for if they find you I am a lost creature.'

"Don Francisco, who in such matters was the very soul of discretion, took leave, although most unwilling to lose any of that amiable company; and the lady led him stealthily to the door, but not without many mutual promises to resume an acquaintance so pleasantly begun."

Don José stopped a moment to light a fourteenth or fifteenth cigarette, looking slowly round and solemnly from one listener to the other.

"The lodging of Don Francisco Velasco," he continued, after that little pause, "was very far from the house of the lady.

"He was walking slowly in the grey dawn, going over with delight the various items of that evening, which seemed to him the pleasantest he had ever spent, and drawing out a mental inventory of the rare charms of that lady. He was disturbed in these agreeable meditations by the sound of a bell, which was tolling *pro defunctis*. He couldn't tell why, but that lugubrious knell irritated him fearfully.

"'Who the devil is this confounded dead creature boring me with all this ringing? he muttered to himself.

"His way led him in front of the church whence the tolling proceeded.

"'Who is it that's dead?' he asked carelessly of the sacristan, who was sweeping the church steps.

"'Doesn't your Excellency know? It is the lady Such-a-One.'

"'Who?' shrieked Don Francisco.

"'The lady Such-a-One, at your Excellency's service.'

"Don Francisco very nearly knocked the poor sacristan into the gutter.

"'Impudent scoundrel! I'll teach you to get drunk and make game of a cavalier,' he cried. 'The lady Such-a-One is alive—extremely alive. Why, I saw her——'

"He was about to add 'not ten minutes ago,' but stopped short, like the discreet gallant that he was.

"The poor terrified sacristan took refuge in the church; and Velasco went his way, resuming the thread of his agreeable reflections, merely laughing at the bungle of that drunken sot. But his laughter was just a trifle forced, and the recollection of last night had lost a little of its sweetness.

"Back at home, he threw himself, dressed as he was, on his bed, and tried to sleep. But he was only just falling asleep when he was roused by the lugubrious sound of a bell ringing the death knell. It was that same bell.

"He called his servant.

"'Run to such and such a church, and ask who it is that's dead. But, mind you, don't ask the sacristan, who's an ass and a drunkard;' and he turned round on his bed and shut his eyes.

"But he found it impossible to sleep. That bell was going on with its melancholy sounds.

"The servant returned.

"'Well?' asked Don Francisco.

"'I didn't ask the sacristan, because your Worship said he was drunk; but I asked a lot of other people. The church was crowded, because they were preparing the catafalque; and they all said that the dead person is the lady Such-a-One.'

"Don Francisco jumped off his bed. He seized his hat and cloak, and flew out of the house. In less than a minute he arrived, running with all his might, at the house of his lady-love. There could be no doubt —it was she who was dead. He recognized the coat of arms over the door, the balcony

at which she had appeared. But everything else was changed. The door was streaming open, as is the case in houses where some one has just died; and a crowd of friends and idlers coming in and coming out, according to the Spanish custom, for the fun of seeing the corpse. Velasco pushed his way among the people. He rushed upstairs, passed between a row of lacqueys in mourning, and penetrated into the mortuary room. He recognized the room at once—the curtains, hangings, the paintings on the ceiling, everything. In the middle, surrounded by lighted tapers, was a black coffin placed on a black table. It seemed to Don Francisco that he knew that table; either he had been dreaming, or, a few hours before, he had supped at that table! And in the coffin, dressed in white and covered with flowers, he saw *her!* It was she, there could be no doubt. It was that same face of strange and sinister loveliness, with the locks of black hair, paler

yet, nay waxen, and already tipped with the violet tints of death.

"Velasco stood still, and considered her long and carefully, with a kind of ferocity. He was making frightful efforts to understand. This woman—three hours ago—he had spoken to her, kissed her; she had been alive, most living. And yet—— This woman, this corpse, already stiffened, and which was beginning to show the hues of corruption, was a thing dead, stark dead, since some time.

"'When did she die?' he asked of one of the women who surrounded the coffin.

"'Last night, about eleven.'

"It must have been about eleven when he had first seen her leaning out at the balcony; or rather when he had dreamed she had done so. For it became more and more evident, with every moment that he stood before the coffin, staring at that pale and violet-hued face in the yellow light of the tapers, that he had been the sport

of a dream—a dream of marvellous vividness, but a dream certainly. And meanwhile the bell continued tolling the death knell.

"He must have seen her recently; and he had dreamed of her, heaven knows why. The whole of that adventure had been only a dream. Don Francisco, you see, was a libertine and an atheist: he believed neither in God nor in the Devil. Therefore he was bound to think that it had all been a dream. But how vivid, by Heaven! He was going away. He turned round once more to have a last look at that face of wonderful and sinister beauty, stranger and not less beautiful now. Looking round, he saw, by the light of the tapers, standing in a corner, a guitar.

"It was his.

"After this," added Don José, looking at us one by one with that gravity of a hidalgo by Velasquez; "after this, Don Francisco Velasco mended his ways. He

took to good works and religious exercises; and died, as I said before, in odour of sanctity."

In a flare of pink bengal light, and a suffocating stench of sulphur, the statue of the Commander, seated at supper, offered politely to help Don Juan to various dishes composed of live vipers, hell flames, and similar delicacies.

We left the theatre, and walked slowly towards home, beneath a winter full moon that looked like blue steel, and against which stood out yellow the gaslights, and the little lamps of the orange barrows at the theatre door. The streets, bathed in white light, were empty between the tall white houses; only, every now and then, there echoed the voice of some fellow calling his companions or the false notes of a chorus of street boys. The conversation naturally turned upon Don Juan; upon that legend, so intensely national, and which has yet imposed itself upon the imagination of the

whole world; upon that great sinner who descended to damnation in an apotheosis of poetry and music.

"Don Juan," said the English essayist, "is merely the ideal representative of those things which the world still admires, but religion already condemns. He symbolizes the melancholy truth that when authorised morality has already long determined that some deeds ought not to be committed, the world still allows them, nay applauds if they are committed gallantly, with aristocratic bravery, art, and insolence: seducing women, killing men in duels, ruining one's creditors, and generally setting the very worst example to everybody. The moral and imaginative originality of Spain consists in this, that while other nations have recognized only one side of the problem, the English throwing stones at Lovelace, the French bowing obsequiously before M. de Camors; the Spaniards have known how to distinguish, just as my coachman knows how to distinguish when he

says that, if he had his way, the inventors of steam-trams ought to be given the cross of an order and then thrown down from the tower of Palazzo Vecchio. Spain has dropped a deep curtsey before Don Juan; and then sent him comfortably to fry in Hell."

We had got to the top of Via dei Servi. The square surrounded by slender porticoes, was filled with luminous moon-mist; and in the midst of that pale, blue, luminous haze, rose the equestrian statue of Grand-duke Ferdinand: immense, immaterial, mysterious in that moon-beam which moulded the flanks and neck of the horse, and laid plates of shining silver upon the vague green of the armour.

"The statue of the Commander!" whispered the poetess. And the musical friend intoned, in his deep voice, the even awful notes of Mozart's churchyard scene. "Ribaldo, audace, lascia ai morti la pa-a-a-ce."

Our Spanish friend stopped for a moment in contemplation of that horse and horseman of greenish bronze, who seemed to grow, to become gigantic and slowly to move towards us in the luminous moonlight haze, under the sky of lucid blue steel.

"Don Miguel di Mañara," he said, after a moment, "was a villain of the same sort as Don Juan Tenorio, only rather worse. One evening, as he was going to the lady whom he was courting at that moment, he fell upon a magnificent funeral procession, which was moving slowly with torches and church chants, through the principal streets of his town. Don Miguel was in a hurry, and that procession obliged him either to wait or to take a roundabout way. Impious and violent, he could not endure the delay, and tried to push his way through the crowd. The crowd pushed him back.

"'Who is this dog, this renegade Moor of a dead man, who makes a cavalier lose his

time?' he shouts, pushing his way, sword in hand.

"'It is a great noble,' answer the people; 'it is Don Miguel di Mañara.'

"Don Miguel rushes to the bier and tears off the pall. The dead man is himself!"

SIGNOR CURIAZIO.

A MUSICAL MEDLEY.

SIGNOR CURIAZIO.

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NONSENSE! I said to myself, it surely could never have been that preposterous Curiatius of Cimaroza's *Orazi*,—that most dapper, finical, bergamot-scented, hair-powdered, minuet-tripping, musical demi-god of the year '96, the embodiment—nay, rather the apotheosis—of everything that is *rococo* in music; no, surely not. I had been seeking to sum up for myself my ideas about Wagner's theories and practice, no easy matter in itself; and now the confusion, almost inevitable, in every attempt to reason out musical hows and wherefores, must be quite gratuitously increased by the question, Why on earth there had suddenly

come into my thoughts so irrelevant a creature as Signor Curiazio? if, indeed, Signor Curiazio it really had been.

This is how it had come about. Meditating upon Wagner, I had naturally enough tried to conjure up that recent performance of his *Tristram and Yseult*,—the opera, as all know, in which his theories have been carried out most completely, and with the least possible of those concessions to present musical habits which have been the price of the real popularity of some of his other works. I had tried to remember exactly what that performance had been like—or, rather, what like had been my impressions and feelings, my musical and mental condition—while it went on. First, in my efforts to remember, came back the sort of general remarks which I had made to myself immediately after it was all over; then, and with more difficulty, I was able to realize once more, but only in interrupted bits (like reading a torn-up letter), the way

in which I had felt while listening to that opera. Clearest and strongest came the sense that I had thought the whole performance most utterly and drearily undramatic; that, oddly enough, this composer, who denies the legitimate existence of music when separate from dramatic action, had completely failed to inspire me with the very smallest interest in the men and women whose joys and woes his music professed to express. I remembered how it had struck me that all this world of Tristram and Yseult was utterly unreal, without real emotions, real actions—nay, real actors; since it seemed to me as if these heroic creatures were mere phantoms, such as are formed by the shifting mists and moonbeams and shadows; things which, if you looked into their face, would show a blank, if you followed them, would vanish, dissolve; nay, rather like the fantastic forms that seem to emerge, to rock on the wave-tips, to dive into the wave-hollows of a

moonlit sea ; mere spectre shapes, in reality the mere fancy illumined crests and bosoms of the swaying musical waves. And then it came back to me, gradually, the listening to that music; the watching of that fluctuating ocean of beautiful sound, whose little wavelets, like those of the real ocean, are never exactly identical, and are yet the same from moment to moment; monotonous even in the gusts of passion which every now and then brush across it, creating only a new kind of vagueness, a new kind of monotony; it returned to me, that dreary listening, until the unceasing, invariable emotion of these strains becomes at last no emotion at all, but a kind of weary vacuity; until, as with the sound of the sea or of a river weir, the ceaseless flow of this music lets you perceive, at last, no music at all. Now, whether it was a repetition of what had actually occurred (unperceived and unremembered by myself) during those real hours of real

listening to Wagner's opera, or whether the thing happened only in this imaginary performance of Tristram in my memory, I cannot tell; but certain it is, that floating, as it were, on this flood of vague and wearisome musical impressions, there had come to me, submerged continually, and continually returning to the surface (as all manner of recollected things do go floating and knocking about in one's mind during a musical performance, or the recollection thereof), an idea, an impression, a sort of fragment of consciousness.

I ought not to call it an idea, it was nothing of the sort; it was something utterly confused and nondescript, something which was at the same time (illogical things can be expressed only in illogical words) a sense of approval, and a short phrase of music. This vague I-know-not-what came floating into my consciousness, disappearing and re-appearing, till at length I fished it out, and tried to discover what manner of

thing it might be. After a good deal of wondering, the impression, thought, feeling, —call it by what name you will,—proved itself to consist in a sense of deep sympathy, and of five notes, to which, after a little more scrutiny, I found attached the words —"*O mio Curiazio!*"

Curiazio! Who was Curiazio? and why should that quite uninteresting phrase of old-fashioned recitative have returned to my memory just in the midst of Wagner's opera? Above all, why should a sort of consciousness of something beloved and sorrowed for have come then, and come even now once more, along with it? Curiazio! I said to myself; Curiazio! The only Curiazio I have any knowledge of is the hero of Cimaroza's opera of the *Horatii and Curiatii*, which I read years ago, when I had a great craze for all manner of eighteenth-century concerns, especially musical. And, in fact, this phrase which thus returned to me, wholly detached from its surroundings,

must be a sentence of a long recitative in which Horatia, sister of the Roman champions, bewails the death of her lover Curiatius ; a recitative which cannot be very interesting in itself, since this phrase is the only scrap of it that I can possibly call to mind. Thus much is clear. But why on earth should these five notes have haunted me during the Wagner performance ? Why of all operatic heroes and heroines that ever existed, should this Curiazio have intruded into the company of Tristram and Yseult ? In order that you may appreciate to the full the unexpectedness, the incongruity, the grotesqueness of this meeting between the most tragic pair of mediæval lovers and this particular ancient Roman of the late eighteenth century, it is necessary that I attempt to give you some idea of Signor Curiazio. The business is a little roundabout, but its oddity deserves to be satisfactorily understood.

One of the most curious visions of that

Italian operatic world of the eighteenth century, of which Signor Curiazio is one of the chief heroes, is afforded in a comedy entitled *Le Convenienze Teatrali* (the etiquette of the stage), by one Antonio Sografi of Padua. Its subjects are the immediate preliminaries of the performance of a bran-new heroic opera at the annual fair of Lodi in Lombardy, somewhere in the eighties or nineties of the last century; and its principal fault consists of omitting a number of remarkable characters and important transactions belonging to an earlier date in affairs; which, however, thanks to the writings of Goldoni, of Marcello, of Gozzi, and of a great number of other wits of the eighteenth century, it will be quite possible to reproduce in a sort of imaginary prologue to Sografi's play.

Let us therefore begin. An exceedingly lean and lantern-jawed person, dressed in excessively ragged and snuff-stained clothes, has by dint of invincible patience and humility under insult, of much flattery of

lacqueys, chorus singers, tailors' apprentices, and ladies' maids, at last made his way to the great Venetian manager, and induced him to take him into his services as poet-in-ordinary to the operatic company of Lodi. This poet, whom subsequent events may possibly identify with Antonio Sografi in person, is a man of genius whose philosophical theses have been rejected by many universities, whose imitations of French novels or of the History of the Cavaliere Carlo Gradisson, by Mossù Richardson, have been sent back by every bookseller in the Merceria at Venice; whose birthday odes and sonnets "on a favourite canary," on "a little dog named Puff," etc., etc., etc., have failed to elicit any kind of munificence on the part of various noble Mæcenases and divine nymphs; but who has now made up his mind that his vocation is tragedy—that is to say, opera, and that in a few years he will receive an autograph letter from the Emperor of Germany, Ever August, offering

him any number of golden ducats, besides houses, villas, coaches, liveries, and the rank of Aulic Counsellor, if he will consent to step into the place of Poeta Cesareo, unworthily occupied ever since the demise of the immortal Abate Metastasio. The emoluments offered by the great Impresario are indeed (as the poet confides to sundry ragged and hungry men of letters at the coffee-house, where, saving firing and lights, he spends his days and nights, living on sugar and water) not what a poet of his standing might have insisted upon; but then, as everybody knows, glory, not base lucre, is the true remuneration of genius. Meanwhile arrives at last the longed-for day, when the poet is to read his master-piece to the principal performers and to a small number of distinguished patrons of poetry and song at the house of the most illustrious Count Somaroni, a great local Mæcenas who has been induced to buy a quarter of the shares in the theatre on the arrangement

that his name is to figure on all the play-bills, and on all the sonnets which are being printed to be showered down on the first performance. After several hours spent in ingeniously powdering his wig with flour from the baker's downstairs, and painting the rusty seams of his coat with ink, the son of Apollo, as he usually styles himself, betakes himself to the Somaroni Palace, impressing upon himself on no account to unbutton his clerical black coat, as he has recently left his waistcoat in pawn. The lacqueys at the palace show at first an unaccountable reluctance to let him in, but at last consent, and deposit him in an ante-room, taking good care to turn the key in all the neighbouring doors. Here he is, after an hour or so, joined first by one, then by another of his operatic colleagues, the scene - painters, mechanicians, composer, second or third tenor, second or third woman (for the *prima donna* will naturally arrive only when the whole meeting has

broken up), dropping in, in the order of their unimportance, and making surprised remarks, raising complaints in proportion to their own magnitude of position, at nobody being there to receive them. Finally in runs the great Impresario in person, a little creature who attempts, in glib Venetian dialect, to pacify the company, which naturally falls upon him like one man. What can he do, if the *primo uomo* is two hours and a half too late for his appointment, and if the illustrious Mæcenas have forgotten all about the business? He, poor man, what is he? At this moment the folding doors are thrown open, and every one rises, men and women, singers, composer, scene-painters, mechanicians, poet. On the threshhold a polite pantomime is going on between the great *primo uomo* and the great Mæcenas; each feeling in his heart that he is not of such fully established greatness perhaps as the other, bowing, smiling, waving his hand towards the door, and

entreating the other to precede him. Finally the *primo uomo*, having the better opinion of himself of the two, walks in before the illustrious Mæcenas, who is thirty years his senior, and whose ancestors were German barons of Barbarossa. The Count gracefully kisses his finger tips to the female part of the assembly ; the *primo uomo* stalks in as if he had never seen any of them before, and immediately begs the Count's permission to put on his hat. After which he buttonholes him, and begins to converse with him on indifferent topics in front of the large earthenware brazier which serves to heat the apartment. At last the manager, after many imploring looks, some muttered oaths among the rest of the company, and many unnoticed Neapolitan ejaculations from the composer, comes forward, and ventures to remind His Excellency that he had graciously promised to listen to the reading of the libretto of the new opera. Mæcenas consents, and settles himself in an arm-chair.

The *primo uomo* stretches himself gracefully on a sofa, the better to display the top-boots and leathern breeches which denote his admiration for English institutions; the poet, all in a tremble, gets up behind his table, unrolls his manuscript, coughs, and looks round him. . . . His eyes fall upon the *primo uomo*, who is leaning backwards on the sofa, and recounting to Mæcenas the manner in which he ordered those top-boots, and threatened the shoemaker with a whipping if he made more than the prescribed five wrinkles. The poet, who has just read the three words, "Anaximander, King of ——" stops, sighs, looks round. Then, failing to obtain any notice, he coughs again, and in a louder voice reads, "Anaximander, King——" A slight murmur of approbation greets him from those seated round the table; but the two on the sofa pay no attention. The Impresario groans, clasps his hands, shrugs his shoulders; then at last screws up his courage, and rising,

bows to the ground before the Count, asking him when it will suit his pleasure that the reading should begin. Mæcenas gives a well-bred start, puts out both his hands, nods, and begs the poet to begin reading his immortal work.

"Anaximander, King of Magnesia," reads the poet; "a lyric tragedy in three acts."

"Bravo!" cries the Count.

"A-hem!" remarks the Impresario. "Would you mind reading that name again, dearest Poet?"

"Anaximander, King of Magnesia."

"Magnesia! *Mamma mia!*" exclaims the thick Neapolitan voice of the composer; "at all events he could never be in want of drugs, that king of yours!"

"Ana—Ana—excuse me," interrupts the Impresario, but does it not seem to your Excellency" (turning to the Count) "that that name would not be quite the thing on the play-bills?"

"No thought of it, Poffar di Bacco!" answers the Count.

"I think then," lisps the Impresario in his dainty Venetian, "that we must look for another title. Tell me, most esteemed poet, is there no action—no something or other in the play, which might serve as a title instead of Ana—Ana—what's his name? For instance, the Heroic Deceit, the Generous Usurper—anything pretty like that?"

"The King of Magnesia, or the Unintentional Apothecary (*lo speziale senza volerlo*)" suggests the composer.

"*Silenzio!*" cries the Count.

"I fear," answers the poor poet, desperate to get on, "that there isn't—at least, I can't think of any at present, perhaps later."

"Yes, yes, later," exclaim the Count and Impresario, simultaneously; "please go on. It is very interesting."

"Anaximander, King of Magnesia," reads the poet for the fourth time.

"An—ax—i—mander," comments the

Impresario. "*Madonna mia!* That will never do for the play-bill."

"Act I., Scene I.," continues the poet. "The stage represents a rich and magnificent portico, communicating with delicious gardens; a deep river in the background—a boat slowly descends the river."

The Impresario and the scene-painter have meanwhile been exchanging various mysterious signs.

"I beg your pardon," says the scene-painter, "would you mind turning that river into the sea? We have the sea still remaining from *Achilles on Scyros*, of five years ago, with a ship and all. I cannot undertake to give a river for the same price, as it would have to be newly painted."

"But it is inland—it is in Media; there is no sea there," cries the poet.

Bah!" answers the Impresario; "what does that matter—a sea or a river? It's all the same water, *la-x'è sempre acqua l'istess*——"

"Try putting it somewhere else," suggests the scene-painter.

The poet makes a marginal note and proceeds.

"Gardens, with a river—I mean the sea —in the background; a boat approaches; Artabaxus gets out of it, followed by Pharnabanes; he motions Pharnabanes to remain in the background; Artabaxus alone."

The poet turns towards the *primo uomo*, who has meanwhile sat down to the harpsichord and begun strumming and humming in his teeth, "If a finger has been burnt, with ink it can be cured," etc., from Paisiello's *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

"This, sir," says the poet, in his most mellifluous voice, "concerns you, if I may hope to have the supreme joy of hearing your magical voice giving life to my ——"

"With ink it can be cured that's true," proceeds the *primo uomo*, imitating, with ridiculous effects, the deepest tones of the

basso buffo, to the roars of laughter of the Count.

"If I may hope to have the supreme joy of hearing your magical voice giving life to my poor rhymes," concludes the poet.

"Eh?" asks the singer, turning round; "did you speak?"

"I said, sir, that this is your part," answers the poet, losing patience.

"Ah, good; then you may read," and the *primo uomo* turns round, his hands in the pockets of his yellow-and-blue striped groom's waistcoat, tenderly contemplating his boot-tops, and conscious at the same time of the inimitable manner in which his hair, just a little grey with powder, is cut over his eyes in a *fringe à la Brutus*.

"Artabaxus—that is you, sir, alone."

"Is that the beginning of the play?" asks the *primo uomo*, raising his eyes but not his head.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, well, you will be so good as to

alter it, and to remember in future that I make it a rule never to come on the stage for the first time except on horseback.'

"But—I really am very sorry—in future I shall bear it in mind, but on this occasion——"

"And," proceeds the *primo uomo*, "of course you are aware that the last air of each act has to be sung by me."

"We shall see what the *prima donna* says to that," mutters the Impresario.

"And that I must have a scene in prison, chained, with a recitative, in the second act, before the pathetic air."

"For a moment, let us see about this horse—*sto benedeto cavalo*," says the Impresario briskly. "*Orsù*, dearest poet, put in a little note about the horse in the first act."

"But——" protests the poet, who has vainly been attempting to speak.

"You shall see what a horse!" cries the Impresario to the *primo uomo*, "a horse!—such a horse! I swear that not even the

Emperor himself has such a beast in his stable. Big, tall, fiery, raises his legs, that it's a delight to see him; and at the same time good, sweet, steady, as if he were made of sugar."

"But it is quite impossible for you to come in on horseback. Artabaxus is an out-lawed prince, pursued, and he has come in a boat, disguised as a fisherman," at last blurts out the poet.

"He will have to come in on horseback all the same," answers the *primo uomo*.

"I really am in the last degree sorry; but how can he come on horseback, when he is pretending to be a fisherman?"

"I am not coming in like a dirty fisherman, and I am coming in on horseback."

The Impresario perceives that the situation is getting rather strained.

"Of course," he exclaims; "who talks of anything else? It's a matter which can be settled with a stroke of the pen. *Ghe se accomoda co no strissin de pena.*"

The poet clutches his head wildly with both hands.

"But, Little World! Mondo Piccino! how can I make him come in on horseback? Consider the dramatic situation."

"What is this pig of a dramatic situation to me?" cries the *primo uomo*, getting shrill. "I come in on horseback, or not at all."

"Of course," cries the Count.

"Of course," cries the Impresario; "how should he come, except on horseback? And he rides divinely! One must see it! *Ghe le x'è proprio un piaser.*"

"But a horse cannot come in a fishing-boat," protests the poet.

"I have always had a horse," whimpers the *primo uomo* angrily. "I have had a horse at Palermo, at Genoa, at Venice——"

"Was it one of those off St. Mark's, my heart?" asks the composer in an undertone.

"They had to put in a horse at Turin

and at Parma, by order of the Minister," proceeds the *primo uomo*, "and I am not to have a horse at a dirty, pottering fair of Lodi!"

"*Per Carità*," implores the Impresario, "don't excite yourself. He has had a horse by order of the Spanish ambassador once, do you hear?"

"But it is not a matter of whether it is Lodi or Venice; it is a question of dramatic propriety."

"What's dramatic propriety to me?" shrieks the *primo uomo*; "a thing for a dirty, starving ragamuffin of a poet! Come and talk about dramatic propriety to a *virtuoso* of my standing!"

"It is indeed vain to talk of such things to the likes of you," answers the poet.

"I, who have sung at Petersburg, in London, in Vienna—a cavaliere like me, is to be taught dramatic propriety by a Mr. Playtinker, a Sir Patcher-up-of-nonsense—a——"

"Do not pay any attention to the fool, the dog, the poet," implores the Impresario; "he shall be brought round to his senses. Oh, be calm! Remember your voice."

"And you," turning to the poet with a terrible voice, "begone! Decamp!" Then, in a whisper, "We'll settle it all later."

"Begone!" echoes the Count sternly.

"Begone!" repeats the chorus of performers.

"Adieu, King of Magnesia!" sings the composer; "heaven prosper thee as an apothecary, if not as a sovereign."

"Never mention his play to me again," gasps the *primo uomo*, sinking into a chair and pressing his much-scented handkerchief to his lips; "never mention his name, or I shall break a bloodvessel."

The poet stops at the top of the stairs, where he feels tolerably safe.

"And this," he exclaims, "this is the sort of being, of worm, of lowest of man-

kind, which disposes of the fate of the drama! Oh, Times! Oh, Muses! Oh, Italy! Oh, Poetry!"

Of course I am not at all prepared to pretend that the particular opera poet whose adventures are thus unfolding themselves in my mind, was actually Antonio Sografi; but, as the mediæval biographers of saints are wont to say, while I cannot affirm that this is fact, it pleases me to think that it very likely was. At any rate, a prologue in reality of this kind seems to explain, to introduce with great naturalness Sografi's own play, whether he have ultimately put in that horse, arranged the pathetic scene in prison, taught the Neapolitan composer the right quantity of the words, given an exactly equal number of verses and dramatic situations (as well-regulated poets should) to the *seconda donna* and the *secondo uomo*, taught acting to the subordinate characters, run errands for the composer, the ballet master, the tailor and hairdresser,

and made himself generally poetically useful; or whether he have carried off the MS. of Anaximander, King of Magnesia, and in a fit of tragic despair sold it for a sausage to the grocer round the corner. For the *Convenienze Teatrali*, which is an admirable play, and as much droller than the scene depicted by myself as a real comedy must be droller than common life, is obviously the revenge of the opera poet. The Count is there, the scene-painter, the *seconda donna*, the *secondo uomo*, the German tenor, the Neapolitan composer, the Venetian Impresario are all there. But two great changes have taken place. The regular poet has been dismissed, and replaced by a cobbler, who make sonnets for love-sick ladies' maids; and the *primo uomo*, the insolent *primo uomo*, is eclipsed, driven to the wall, trampled upon by a *prima donna* more magnificent and sensitive than himself. Indeed, the play, throughout its hubbub of squabbles of *seconde donne* jabber-

ing Milanese and Bolognese, of ballet masters who can dance their *pas seul* only in E flat, of Impresario and composer pulled and pushed in every possible direction, imploring and swearing respectively in Venetian and in Neapolitan—the real action in all this is the utter humiliation by the *prima donna* of the miserable *primo uomo*, at whose name she is seized with a kind of sickened contempt. And the height of all things is when, he having secured his pathetic situations from the poet, having ordered his dress, as Roman general, of white and faded rose colour, and having extorted from the composer his grand *rondò* in his pet tonality of *De-La-Sol-Re*, with the understanding that, although victorious by the fate of arms, he is to sing it in the third act with nice shining, clanking chains on, the better to move the ladies in the boxes—when, I say, he has obtained all that his rank gives a right to, the *prima donna*, terrifying Impresario, poet, com-

poser, tailor and all, sweeps away from him all these inestimable prerogatives; appropriates for her part all the *primo uomo's* pathetic situations, reserves for her costume the *primo uomo's* chosen white and faded rose colour, and crowns her iniquities by snapping up his *rondò*,—the *primo uomo's rondò* in *De-La-Sol-Re*, and announcing that she, and no other, will sing it, chains, *De-La-Sol-Re*, and all, at the end of the third act.

What, you will ask, has all this story of the opera poet of the Fair of Lodi to do with Curiazio, much less with Wagner's *Tristram*, which was what we began talking about? With regard to *Tristram*, we shall get to it presently, and you must have patience for the moment. As to Curiazio, the connection is explained in one minute. This same Antonio Sografi, whom we have chosen to identify with that particular opera poet of Lodi, did not write merely the very amusing comedy of the *Convenienze Tea-*

trali; since in 1796 was performed at Venice, with music by Domenico Cimarosa, his grand three-act heroic opera entitled *The Horatii and Curiatii*, one of the most successful works of the whole eighteenth century, and which, in the opinion of contemporaries, showed Cimarosa as great a composer in the serious style as his *Matrimonio Segreto* had shown him in the comic. Of this opera, the *Horatii and Curiatii*, the hero, the chief interest, the pinnacle of perfection, is that same Curiazio whose name, attached to those five notes of recitative, had so unaccountably intruded into the midst of my impressions of Wagner's opera, awakening in me that vague movement of sympathy so strangely contrasting with my indifference to the misfortunes of the Lord of Lyonesse and the Queen of Cornwall. The play, thus set to music by the Italian Mozart, is merely an adaptation to operatic purposes of Corneille's tragedy of *Les Horaces:* the Horatii and

Curiatii are on the point of being united by the marriage of Horatia, the daughter of the old Horatius, with the youngest of the three Curiatii; when war between Rome and Alba suddenly bursts out, and, to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the two kings determine to settle their dispute by the combat of the three Roman brothers against the three Alban brothers; two of the Horatii are slaughtered at once, but the third, Marcus Horatius, returns single handed and overcomes the three Curiatii in succession; then, irritated at the lamentations and reproaches with which he is received by his sister, he stabs her among the blood-stained spoils of her lover, Curiatius. Anything more solemn, more sternly, savagely tragic than this subject it would, as every one must agree, be quite impossible to find; it is the typical patriotic and military tragedy of early Rome, in its brutal grandeur the most Roman tale of any. A tale, moreover, which you would say that

those men of 1796, whose ears were full of the roar of a republic more tragic, more terrible, more irresistibly conquering than Rome itself, must have understood even better than ourselves, feeling it made modern, akin to themselves, by the fears or the hopes, the enthusiasm and awe of that moment when the canon of Arcole and Rivoli were being dragged across the Alps. Hence, if ever the play of Corneille might find worthy musical expression, it should certainly have been on that occasion, when the greatest of living Italian composers set his notes to Sografi's *Horatii and Curiatii.* But it was not so: of that terrible legendary Rome, of that terrible conquering Republic of '96, there is, in the opera of Cimarosa, not the slightest suggestion. More potent on the fancy of the great composer than the ferocious legend of the past, than the ferocious realities of the present, was the inspiration of that world of tyrannical *prima donnas* and coxcomb

primo uomos, of shoemaker poets and accommodating managers, that world of the *Convenienze Teatrali*, with its exquisitely trained voices, its admirably elegant music, its contempt for history, geography, possibility, its utter scorn of dramatic propriety, its Roman general's dresses of white and faded rose, its triumphant *rondòs* with well-polished chains. The music of Cimarosa, so far from being sternly savage, is merely ridiculously lovely. And of this music the part of the murdered Curiatius is the concentration, the very perfection of loveliness and absurdity. Music which, alas! the many delicate recitatives, the beautiful *rondò* (whether or not with chains *obbligati*), the many delightful scraps in concerted pieces, the exquisite duet with Horatia, the famous air *Quelle Pupille tenere*, which, tender and brilliant by turns, and always inimitable, was for years the despair and the pride of all the greatest Italian singers—all this, alas! long supplanted by other things,

grown too difficult for coarse modern performers, for coarse modern audiences, is now utterly forgotten; so that I can scarcely hope that one of my readers may connect with these names anything beyond a mere blank. Well, I was going to say, that forgotten as is now the music of the *Horatii*, nay, inaccessible except in musical archives, I must attempt, though it can never be satisfactorily done in words, to give some approximate notion, by means of much comparison and metaphor, of the musical peculiarities which made this part of Curiatius such a masterpiece of utter dramatic incongruity and insanity.

Those, therefore, to whom my poor Curiazio can never be more than a mere name, I would entreat to summon up all their recollections of the only surviving scion of the old race of operatic heroes of the eighteenth century, of the last stragglers from the times of *rondòs with chains* and white and faded rose-coloured uniforms, the

Arsace of Rossini's *Semiramide.* We all of us know Arsace—the slender and beardless young creature who commands the Assyrian forces, canopied in the greatest glory of vocal embroidery and brocade which has ever fallen to the lot of a general-in-chief; who, with his girl's figure and woman's voice browbeats the assembled Assyrian grandees, enthrals the heart of Semiramis, and then showers down upon the murderers of his father a perfect firework of vocal rockets and catherine wheels. Well, Arsace may give us some idea of Curiazio, but merely as would the shadow of the substance. For Curiazio is to a far higher extent all the things which constitute Arsace; he is younger, slimmer, more utterly beardless, more completely like a woman, more exquisite, more beautiful, more utterly unmanly, unheroic, undramatic, untragic. Compared with him Arsace is already a compromise with the bellowing, bouncing, bearded protagonist of the modern

opera. Arsace is a half measure, an imperfect creature, almost a hybrid. To begin with, Curiazio is a good fourth higher in the musical scale; Arsace is only a contralto, Curiazio is a complete and exquisite soprano; where, in particularly dreadful moments, Arsace would rumble down into the deepest notes of his voice, Curiazio swings—nay, rather flies up to the very seventh heaven of vocal deliciousness, descending at most but a very little, dropping from the highest note to the less high with something of the sound of a sigh, and somewhat of the movement of a flower folding up at dusk. Where Arsace is wrathful, Curiazio is merely tender; where Arsace is emphatic, Curiazio is sprightly; when Arsace is ominous, Curiazio is jubilant; and where Arsace extends (musically speaking) his arm in a movement of awe-stricken terror, Curiazio trips through the nimblest of his minuets; in short, wherever Arsace slightly draws nearer

to one's ordinary conception of a man and a soldier, Curiazio becomes more and more completely the beautiful young woman dressed up, in shining and glittering tissues and gew-gaws, as the Sir Pink of Perfection, the Prince Charming of a fairy tale.

Such is our Signor Curiazio, daintiest and brightest and lightest of all vocal ancient Romans that ever were; most ideal product of the utterly undramatic Italian musical world of the late eighteenth century, of which we have just seen a few of the grotesque realities. And delightful as he is himself, he becomes absolutely comic when brought into connection with war and fratricide, with Roman sternness and savageness: the smile of pleasure with which we greet him is infallibly tinged with a considerable amount of amusement. Knowing this much, it is as easy to understand my astonishment when this musical figure from another world suddenly arose in my mind between the tragic figures of Tristram and

Yseult, as it is difficult to explain what mysterious and inappropriate reason suddenly brought home to me, in the midst of Wagner's music, and with that queer vague movement of sympathy, those five notes of recitative linked to the words "*O mio Curiàzio!*"

The peculiarity of the whole matter consists in the discrepancy between the thing heard and the thing remembered; between the music of Wagner constantly straining after dramatic effect, and the music of Cimarosa serenely and sweetly overlooking everything of the sort; and the explanation also must, I suspect, be sought for in the fact of a contrast. For since there is no earthly resemblance between Curiazio and Tristram and Yseult, their momentary association, in my mind, must surely have been that of conflict. Conflict most certainly; but what should have called it forth? Given Curiazio and given Tristram, the two sets of ideas must come to

blows; but why should they ever have met? In order to get at the bottom of this I must evidently return once more to the precise moment when this fantastic meeting took place. It was, as I have said, just when I was so strongly conscious of complete absence of interest in Wagner's hero and heroine, of complete indifference to their woes and welfare, that I was suddenly visited by the memory of Curiazio. And with that memory, with those five notes of recitative to which his name was attached, had come a vague emotion of love and regret—almost of pain. The notes were out of the recitative in which, before bursting into abuse of war and Rome and Horatius, the betrothed of Curiatius bewailed the death of her lover; nay, they belonged, I fancy, to the first few instants after her certainty of her lover's death. And the vague emotion which had accompanied those notes in my memory, was, I find, a sort of feeling of sorrow which had

been habitual with me every time that, years ago, I used to read over that scene of Cimarosa's opera: sorrow, regret for poor dead Curiazio, almost as if he had been a real person, whom I had known and cared for. The recollection of his sorrow had come just when I was feeling so utterly indifferent to Tristram and Yseult; it had been the result of contrast, and that bar, "*O mio Curiazio!*" had returned to my mind as if to say, "Yes, it is quite true that these musical folk are nothing to you, but don't imagine yourself to be without a soft corner in your heart for some other musical people." In short, the fact that I could not possibly love or feel sorry about Tristram and Yseult, had called forth the fact that I had loved and been sorry for Curiazio.

And now we come to the really curious part of the matter, which is the question why I should have been indifferent to the one and sorry for the other; indifferent to the ill-fated pair whose involuntary sin had

been well-nigh effaced by their misfortunes and their fidelity, so that the rose bramble which grew out of the grave of Yseult, had travelled till its briar and its flowers had settled also over the body of Tristram, lovers of whom the whole Middle Ages had sung, and whose tale had brooded for years in the mind of the most imaginative musician that has ever lived ; and sorry for the preposterous *rococo* Prince Charming, the perfect little Dresden china shepherd, with powdered hair and gilded crook, whom the ignorant, self-sufficient, illiterate, undramatic poets, composers, *prima donnas*, and *primo uomos*, the grotesque theatrical creatures of the last century, had had the astounding imbecility to present to the world as their notion of a Roman warrior. Thinking over it, I think the answer might be given in one line, only that the answer would involve fresh questions. I am sorry for Curiazio, because Curiazio has an individuality, and I am indifferent to Tristram and Yseult because they have none.

An individuality; that's a very neat word with which to settle the question; but had we not better make sure whether such a thing as a musical individuality really does exist? An individuality means the sum total of all those characteristics, physical, mental, and moral, by which we distinguish one person from another; and to have an individuality is merely another way of saying, to be a person. Now a person is a thing which we can see and touch; which feels and thinks, which, by its words and actions, will produce a certain effect upon our bodies and our souls, which will respond, by similar sensitiveness, to our words and our actions; it is a thing composed of body and soul, which, if not actually present, we can represent by painting or carving, in colours, or stone, or words, its outward appearance and movements, its mode of feeling and thinking.

Such a thing as this, such an individu-

ality or person, we can easily find, not merely in Curiazio, but quite equally in Tristram and Yseult, if we read the words which each respectively speaks, and in which each, in the opera libretto, is spoken of by the other *dramatis personæ;* there is, in the little prosy book of Sografi, in the little high-flown book by Wagner, a man answering to the name of Curiazio, a knight, and a lady, called Tristram of Lyonesse, and Yseult of Cornwall. But what is there in the music of Cimarosa, in the music of Wagner? Strike your pen through the words written under each vocal part, and what remains? Notes, combinations of notes, melodies, harmonies, groupings of voices and instruments, counterpoints, orchestral movements, louds and softs, quicks and slows, music, or rather the recipe for producing music; in all this not a line, or curve, or colour which might give you some notion of the figure and face of either Curiazio, or Tristram, or Yseult;

not a word which might tell you their habits of thought and feeling. Here I know you will interrupt me, insisting that it is these very notes which tell us how each of them thought and felt, and, by implication, to a certain extent, how each of them looked. Nay! be not so sure. There is in each of these combinations of sounds, in each of these musical wholes which we call a piece, a power of awakening in us (owing to some dim and distant train of association, if not in ourselves, then in our remotest ancestors) the more or less distinct impression of some particular state of emotion: the power, as it were, of projecting into our soul the shadowy semblance of joy, or grief, or rage, or tenderness which we ourselves have experienced. This emotion-suggesting power there is, or rather there may be (for frequently there is nothing of the sort), in every piece of music, so that we say of it that it is passionate or calm, or cheerful or

sad. In the music, therefore, we have emotion; but emotion is not he or she who feels it; emotion is not a man or a woman, it is not an individual; and however much we may class under the musical notes the words spoken by Curiazio, by Tristram, or by Yseult, in those notes, in that music, there is neither Curiazio, nor Tristram, nor Yseult; and the proof is that we may replace the words of these individuals by the words of other individuals; to these notes, to this impersonal emotion, we may unite the emotion expressing words of—whom shall we say?—Titus, or Launcelot, or Francesca of Rimini; but however much the two things may affect us simultaneously and similarly, in that music there is no more Titus, nor Launcelot, nor Francesca, than there was Curiazio, or Tristram, or Yseult, than there could be you, or I, or Robinson Crusoe. But if, as would appear, there is personality only in the words of the libretto, but none in the score of the

opera, what becomes of this personality of Curiazio about which we have been laughing? If Curiazio is ridiculous it is merely in Cimarosa's music; and if he cannot exist except in Sografi's poem, why, then, the words being quite sensible, and the music quite beautiful, there being no longer a personality, which can be ridiculous or the contrary, what remains for us to laugh at?

Apparently nothing; and apparently, also, all the character-study which we have made at the expense of this poor ancient Roman of 1796, has been, in good metaphysical language, the criticism of the non-extant. So it would seem. But the hows and whys of music are excessively complicated and misleading: its philosophy is a perfect phantasmagoria of strange things, projected we know not whence, reflected, and reflected again, we can scarcely tell how; and we must therefore not be in such a hurry to suppose that we have been

utterly deluded, or that we have got to the bottom of this question of personality. Let us face it again; or rather let us attack it from another side. And, in order to do so, let us deal with concrete examples, and no longer with mere abstract theories.

Well, some time ago I heard, for the first time since my childhood, Palestrina's great Mass of Pope Marcellus; and I was much struck at finding that my impressions of this music differed only in their definiteness and more thorough understanding, from the impressions which years ago I used to experience when listening, a thin and long-legged little savage of twelve, amidst the crowd in the Pope's Chapel. The music was all about nothing at all. I can quite remember my childish wonder at the way in which this music went on. At that incessant movement which never leads anywhere, that incessant crossing of lines which are not woven together, to which I used to listen with the sort of dull surprise

with which I might have watched the constant fluctuation, moving forwards and backwards, intertwining and loosening of lines, in the eddies made by a river against a bridge pier: there is shape and there is none, there is movement we know not in which direction, and we grow dizzy and drowsy in watching. It seemed as if those many years had never been, as if that might still be the selfsame performance uninterrupted since I was a child; all the difference was that I understood that the floating about of the different parts in strange disconnection, the constant movement of the phrase backwards upon itself, the reabsorption, at it were, into a limbo of sounds of the half-developing form, was due to the timid harmony of the Renaissance, afraid even to overstep the limits of one tonality, and consequently sending every incipient modulation back to its starting-point; that the impossibility of all this leaving a melody in the ear was due to something very akin

to the impossibility of two straight lines constituting a figure. Thus much I was the wiser, but only thus much, and my feelings were still the same. I felt once more the avidity with which the ear catches hold of every promise of a distinct movement (promise continually disappointed), the pleasure lapsing into disgust at the apparent cadences invariably dissolved as soon as noticed; the excitement of the short scale movements upwards and downwards, which seemed, in the midst of this chaos, like exquisite exotic melodies. It went on and on and on, and round and round for ever, sometimes soft, sometimes loud, but ever the same, without limits; an eddying and whirling of strains perpetually revolving upon themselves; parts crossing and recrossing only to remain for ever isolated like disconsolate spirits wandering past each other, or stars moving about in crowded solitude; the music, if ever there was such, of the in-

finite and the impersonal. Why, you will say, your description of Palestrina's Mass sounds uncommonly like your description of Wagner's opera; you are a very odd individual to be thus similarly impressed by compositions which stand, so to speak, at the two opposite ends of musical history. And it is exactly because I knew that there would be such a resemblance, and that such a resemblance would startle you, that I brought the two descriptions before you. In the three centuries which separate the composition of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli* and the composition of *Tristan and Isolde* lies the whole development of modern music. Harmony (for it was the timidity of harmony which cramped all other things), modulation, melody, accompaniment, dramatic recitation, rhythmical and figured effect, orchestration—all these things have utterly changed or arisen altogether in that interval. Monteverde, Carissimi, Scarlatti, Porpora, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schu-

bert, and Schumann, all these have come and done their something new; and while in the second half of the sixteenth century stringed instruments were only beginning to be scientifically constructed, wind instruments were no better than troopers' fifes and bugles, and a single dissonance was eluded, circumvented, and shirked with all the ingenuity of mankind; in the second half of the nineteenth century an orchestra exists which is not merely a vast assemblage of every kind of instrument, but a marvellous new instrument, of marvellous mysterious tone in itself; and there is not a dissonance so fearful that cannot be prepared and arranged and dwelt on and resolved; there is no modulation from tonality to tonality too distant, too bold, too sudden, too astonishing not to be executed almost as easily as a movement from dominant to tonic. Yet, despite this infinite difference in the ways and means which have produced them, the mass by Palestrina and the opera

by Wagner leave the same sort of impression; they are both of them music of the infinite, music about nothing at all, music without personality. Before resuming our difficult attempts at analyzing personality, let us try and discover upon what points of similarity of nature can possibly depend this similarity of effect in such very different compositions. We may briefly recapitulate the things in which Tristram differs most completely from the Mass of Pope Marcellus. In Tristram we see the latest development of modern music, in the Mass its earliest one; in Tristram the conception of music as an auxiliary of poetry reaches the highest point, in the Mass there is not even the faintest trace of such a notion as musical suggestiveness; in Tristram we find modulation of the most amazing boldness, and orchestration of the most marvellous complexity; in the Mass we find modulation scarcely in rudiment, and orchestration wholly ignored. But in

both we find—what I have noted first in the one then in the other—a certain vagueness and aimlessness, an absence of distinct and thoroughly elaborated themes; in *Tristram* musical wavelets which are never exactly alike, and yet never completely different; in the Mass musical swirls and eddies which seem always to lead somewhere and finally lead nowhere. How is this? From what I have said it may perhaps have struck you that Wagner, with his astounding freedom of modulation, may occasionally modulate too much, as Palestrina, with his singular timidity of modulation, certainly modulates too little; that Wagner, with his constantly fluctuating rhythm, may cease to be rhythmical, as Palestrina, with his very rudimentary rhythm, can scarcely be said to have begun to be rhythmical; that the result of over-modulation and of insufficient modulation, the result of too variable rhythm and of too invariable rhythm, may, on the whole, be

the same; nay, that from the desire of suggesting too many ideas and emotions, may result the same vagueness as from the indifference to suggesting anything at all; in short, that as the malleable clay will represent no recognizable figure if insufficiently manipulated by the sculptor, so also will it represent no recognizable figure if the sculptor have manipulated it in all manner of contrary ways; that, in short, as a sculptor may efface his work, and reduce it once more to a mere chaotic lump, so also a musician may, by too great variety of modulation and of rhythm, reduce his compositions to the formless condition in which they are left by absence of rhythm and modulation. Extremes touch, and contrary excesses lead but to the same result: failure. Over-development and insufficient development of musical means and methods are equally fatal to art, to form; and in Wagner, as in Palestrina, what we miss is that which

remains impressed upon the mind, that of which so many a lesser composer has left us a perfect and unalienable heritage: a musical form. Form, you will say, that's all very well, but we have been talking, not about musical form, but about musical personality. You will think me very paradoxical if I answer: when we have got to musical form, we have got also to musical personality, for they are in reality one and the same thing. This seems very odd, but let me explain my meaning. We came to the conclusion, a little while ago, that in music separated from words there is no possible personality; that the notes, however inspiring of this or that emotion, constitute, in their combination, not a person, but a musical composition. This seemed at one moment to knock all musical personality completely on the head. But music, as I before remarked, is a mysterious art, and full of manifold delusions; an art altogether different from

any other. Let us imagine that we are looking at a picture; in so doing, we unconsciously describe that picture to ourselves, we make a kind of inventory of its constituent elements, which we keep by us, and to which we constantly refer in future; well, suppose we are making such an inventory. We say, for instance, there is a piece of stuff arranged in five folds, and its colours are blue and yellow; there is a tree, which is sere and brown; its branches are big, its trunk short; the horizon behind it is very low. In so doing, we are merely recognizing in the work of art things and qualities with which we are familiar in nature; the tree, the stuff, the horizon, all this exists quite independent of any painter who may choose to copy it, and this tree is brown, this stuff blue and yellow, this horizon is low, these branches are thick, exactly in the same sense that other things in real existence are brown, blue, yellow, low, or thick. Now compare with this manner of

cataloguing the elements of a work of art, the manner in which you would describe, however technically, a piece of music: you would say, this piece is of a broad rhythm, and consists of phrases which are alternately rough and smooth; it begins with a weighty passage very low down, and gradually works its way up to a certain height. There is nothing at all fantastical in this, or imaginative, any more than when an Italian musician says of a performance: "It can't succeed, because they have no good *white voices*," meaning trebles; or cries at an unlucky pupil, "Don't tighten!" intimating thereby that he ought not to play so fast. Yet nearly every one of these words, of which we are obliged to make daily use, are merely metaphorical expressions. The characteristics of music are unknown except in music, and have no nomenclature of their own; so that we are simply reduced to applying to musical qualities the names of qualities which can have no musical

existence. For there are not in the domain of sound qualities such as breadth, weight, roughness, or smoothness, all of which are inseparable from tangible objects; nor can there be high or low where there is no existence in space; a high voice is as little really high as it is really white, and a white voice no more exists, in reality, than a pink, blue, or yellow voice. Such is the poverty of musical phraseology even in the simplest technicalities; the qualities are perceived as quite separate, but they are conceived in the terms of other classes of things. Now in mere technical matters this metaphorical language produces no further consequences. But when it comes to the general effects of music, to the character no longer of mere single sounds, or groups of sounds, but of whole pieces; to the impression not merely upon the ear, but upon the mind, we get into an inextricable confusion. As the more elementary qualities of music borrow (perhaps

from some obscure similarity in the effect on our nerves) their names from the qualities of visible and tangible objects, so the large impressions producible by music, have had applied to them (probably from the resemblance of certain musical effects to the natural modes of expression of this or that state of feeling, making us now slow and subdued in our speech, now rapid and boisterous), the nomenclature of our conditions of soul. Certain musical effects possess, as we have already remarked, the power of dimly suggesting this or that kind of feeling; but the music is not the state of feeling: it is the music, and nothing else, as we may easily see by trying to describe merely according to such moral characters, say the various pieces of Schubert's *Schöne Müllerin.* If we say "the melancholy piece," we do not in the least distinguish between three or four different songs, since their identity lies not in this melancholy character, but in their particular combination of notes.

But for such combinations of notes as constitute musical identity we are simply without names, and we are therefore obliged to speak of, to think of various pieces of music in a language quite as figurative as when we say that one man has a hard mind and another a hot temper, the hardness of mind and the hotness of temper being very different to the hardness of a hard pear, or the hotness of a July day. So the more we attempt to describe music to ourselves and to others, the more completely do we get into the habit of talking of music as having a nature which it simply has not got. We think of music, nay we perceive it, in a state of perfect metaphorical jumble. And hence it is that the quality of definiteness of musical form, the something which does not yet exist in Palestrina and has well-nigh ceased to exist in Wagner, becomes in our mind unconsciously confused and identified with definiteness of musical personality; we say,

where we miss it, "This music is all about nothing at all," when in reality no music ever can be about anything at all, and our real meaning is simply, "This music has got no shape." Now do you begin to see what I meant when I said that musical individuality and musical form were one and the same thing; when I persisted in talking about this or that kind of musical personality, while I was perfectly aware that no personality can really exist in music, however much it may exist there for our fancy?

Well, if there appears to us to exist a degree of personality even in a sonata or symphony performed upon mere wordless string, ivory, or brass; think what it must be when a piece of music has welded into it words descriptive of this or that state of emotion; and when music and words come from the lips of a man or a woman on the stage, dressed to represent a given person, and doing his or her utmost to make us

believe, with look and gesture, that the real person is actually before us. The impressions whirl round in our brain in utter confusion. Music, words, dress, and gesture unite, and we cease to know what is what. If, then, the man or woman on the stage sings those words to music which gives us a sense of clearness, of separateness from other music, of co-ordination and completeness in itself, it must inevitably seem to us that this clearness, completeness, separateness is cognate to the moral nature of the living man or woman, to the nature of those human words; we think of it as individuality of character. The well-defined melody becomes, in a manner, the well-defined character of him who sings it; nay, the phrase of music which is poignant to our musical sense nearly always conveys to our mind a certain pathos of poignant emotion. Thus, there are certain effects in duets, especially in those old-fashioned ones between voices of similar pitch, which,

when the two parts touch, embrace, cling to one another, come in contact with painful intensity of dissonance, which must inevitably give us a sense of souls meeting only to part, the pathos of a human farewell, even in a duet like Rossini's *Giorno d'Orror*. Thus, therefore, does musical personality, although a mere phantom, come really to exist (like many another phantom) for our fancy and our affections; thus can we feel, towards what is merely the poignancy of loveliness, a quite human kind of sympathy; we can love, and almost desire to serve on account of their beauty, what are in reality merely arrangements of melodies and harmonies, but of which we think as the heroes or heroines of Gluck or Mozart or Schubert. And finally, for this reason can there really exist for me a Curiazio of Cimarosa, whom, quite unconsciously, I invest with a character analogous to that dainty, brilliant, tender, Prince Charming kind of music, and whom, as a

delightful piece of dramatic incongruity, I ridicule and love.

Yes; I am fond of Curiazio; he amuses me, but he attracts me; he gives me pleasure; above all, I can perceive him, can know when he is and is not there; he is musical flesh and blood; has a musical face and eyes, into which I can look; he has a musical personality. And Tristram and Yseult, I say once more, have none; are mere dim spectres, confused with each other, and confused with all things about them. Why? Because the music which Wagner has composed on to the words expressive of their vicissitudes and of their feelings, is, even like the music of Palestrina's great Mass, music insufficiently distinct in form; music of the infinite; music all about nothing at all; music without personality. And for this reason, therefore, the most imaginative and emotional of all composers, the man whose whole life has been one long meditation on

the weirdness and pathos of mediæval romance, one constant effort to bring them home to us with his music; this man, therefore, has failed, where an utterly unthinking composer, or rather the grotesque world of Sografi's *Convenienze Teatrali* has succeeded; succeeded even to the extent of sending their absurd and charming Curiazio into my mind when it should have been flooded with the thought of Tristram and Yseult.

But what, after all, is the meaning of this liking for Curiazio, this affectionate remembrance of a certain number of familiar tunes? It is not sympathy with suffering, it is not admiration for heroism; it is merely the regretful recollection of a musical pleasure, of the unreasoning, unsympathizing pleasure in certain combinations of melodies and harmonies. It is, say the partizans of Wagner, the low material preference of a mere epicure, to whom music is but a kind of more diaphanous cook's or

perfumer's art. To say that Wagner has failed in exciting such feelings as these, is to say that he has not done what he would scorn to do. The great dramatic mission of music consists for him not in exciting a liking for ridiculous effeminate *rococo* heroes on account of the pretty little *ariettas* and *rondòs* which they may sing, but in overwhelming the souls of the hearers with that terrific flood of passion upon which Fate has cast the souls of Tristram and Yseult, to be whirled and submerged like reeds or straws; what Wagner would bring home to you is not the love of this person for that person, the petty loves of Signor Curiazios and Signora Orazias, but love itself in all its fearful irresistibleness. This certainly does sound much grander than merely making one like Signor Curiazio; and yet I am not so sure about it. I do not mean to refer to my individual self, having remained unmoved and decidedly wearied by this *Tristram*

music, while a large proportion of other musically-endowed persons were doubtless in a very different condition. For it is a fact, the recognition of which would greatly facilitate the comprehension of the Wagner question by removing the assumption, made by the adherents and by the opponents of Wagner, that the opposite party is prejudiced and perjured—it is a fact, then, that there exist two distinct kinds of musical sensitiveness, which neither exclude nor necessitate one another. The first is the essentially musical sensitiveness to musical form, the faculty of receiving pleasure from the musically beautiful; the second is what I should call the nervous sensitiveness to the emotional effects of music — the faculty of being moved, not by musical beauty, but by that emotion-inspiring property possessed to some degree by all music, and by certain music to a quite amazing extent. It is evident then that, in attempting to decide whether it is really

much finer to bring home to the hearer the tremendous gale of passion in which wave and are tattered the souls of Tristram and Yseult, than to inspire us with a liking for some Signor Curiazio—it is evident, or ought to be, that we must accept as true what only our prejudice can deny namely: that although Wagner's music may fail to move ourselves, it may fully succeed in moving a large proportion of our neighbours; and it is not our own stolid weariness, but their half-intoxicated excitement, which we must compare in point of nobility with the kind of satisfaction derived from the placid music of Cimarosa or Mozart.

The nobility or baseness of any work of art, or of any artistic effect is, in the first instance, a matter of superiority or inferiority entirely within the limits of the particular art whereunto appertains that work or that effect. It is a question of the greater or lesser intensity of pleasure which that work or effect can produce. From this point of view

it seems to me obvious that even a partizan of Wagner must admit that if we are, during an hour or so, painfully excited by the music of *Tristram*, of which no very distinct fragments, but only very vague impressions, remain to us afterwards, this *Tristram* music must be inferior, from the mere artistic and pleasure-giving point of view, to the music of Mozart, which, without greatly stirring our emotions, delights us during performance, and leaves in our memory a never-failing stock of musical pleasure. But when we ask whether it is higher to make us momentarily participate in the passionate condition of Wagner's lovers, or to give us an abiding musical satisfaction in Cimarosa's hero, we are in reality shifting the ground of dispute from æsthetics to ethics. The question is no longer which music can give the keener and more durable musical pleasure; but which condition of soul is the higher with reference to the moral and intellectual nobility of our lives,

feelings, and actions: the condition of soul implied by a liking for Curiazio because he sings charming airs; or the condition of soul implied by a momentary participation due to the emotional power of Wagner's music, in the passion of Tristram and Yseult? The answer would seem to be that since we are generally agreed that the interest which we take in a tragedy of Shakspeare's is of a higher and more ennobling order than the interest which we take in a quartet by Haydn; the condition of soul produced by Wagner's music must also be higher and more ennobling than the condition of soul produced by Cimarosa's music; since the first excites in us actual passion, while the second merely occasions musical pleasure. This answer seems obvious, and to Wagnerists is doubtless conclusive. But let us examine why the interest in Shakspeare's play is really of a higher sort than the interest in Haydn's quartet; and wherein consists the differ-

ence between the two sorts of interest. The interest in Shakspeare's play implies a high state of activity of our reason and our sympathies. We are, at every moment, intellectually perceiving the casual connection between the words, actions, and fate of the *dramatis personæ*; we are, at the same time, continually sympathizing with their nature, admiring the good, disliking the bad, pitying the weak, wishing we could resist the unjustly strong; whereas we are, during the performance of Haydn's quartet, merely following the intricate arrangements of notes, the sequences of harmony and of melody. The pleasure in both cases may be equal; but the exercise of our intellect and of our moral sympathies in the one case, is much more conducive to our right thinking, feeling, and acting in real life, than is the exercise of our mere faculties of musical form; and on this superior practical effect upon our judgment and conduct depends, and depends solely,

the greater moral nobility of the tragedy by Shakspeare than of the quartet by Haydn. Now let us apply this test of the super-artistic nobility of works of art to the music of Wagner and the music of Cimarosa. In listening to the songs which constitute that famous part of Signor Curiazio, only our faculties of musical form are active; we are merely perceiving beautiful combinations of notes; and our power of judging of how and why, of right and wrong, our tendency to behave well to our neighbours, is exactly the same after the performance as it had been before, save that we feel perhaps a little better pleased with life, a little reposed and refreshed before resuming its troubles. But with the *Tristram* music it is different; different, I mean, of course, to such of us (and I will try and imagine that it is all of us) as are capable of being moved by it, as Wagner intended us to be moved. We are, let us say, during the performance of the marvellous

garden duet, extremely moved; we are unconscious of the theatre, of the spectators, of the actors; almost of the music and almost of our real selves; for notes, combinations of notes, harmonies, melodies—all these things have disappeared, have melted away. And disappeared also has our past, our present, our future—all the things about which we think, after which we strive, all gone, forgotten. There remains, so to speak, only a something within ourselves which is vibrating, quivering, vaguely wanting, receiving, giving, hungering and thirsting, fainting and gasping, and uprising and shaking at we know not what closed gates; there remains a something outside ourselves which is sweeping across us, sending streams of anguish through the bare nerves of our soul, pouring upon them a quite heavenly balm; chilling us at one moment, and making us burn at another; shaking like an impetuous wind; rocking, submerging

us, like a soft wave. Besides this, a vision, a sort of passing glorified sense of the presence of Tristram and Yseult, whom we love; nay, we do not love them, we love with them. They are in us, and we are in them. Love, but how? Not certainly as we love Desdemona, or Juliet, or Miranda; not even as we love some beautiful soulless statue for its more visible loveliness; not anything like that. In this there is neither sympathy with virtue, nor admiration for beauty; there is merely what there is in Tristram and Yseult themselves, and by what name should we call that? As they love one another, so do we seem to love with them; the buzz of their blood is in our ears, the palpitation of every one of their arteries is throughout our own bodies, the choking of their voice is in our throats. Through ourselves runs a bodily tremor and convulsion of passion communicated by the hurrying violin phrases, the sighing horns, and panting

hautboys, by the throbbing (as of blood in the temples) of the basses in the orchestra, all rushing up to subside in long tremulous ripples, turned to slowly swaying waves of sound, through which, every now and then, well up the broken harp chords. Ourselves, the music, Tristram, Yseult, whither disappeared? We know not; there remains but this strange mist of passion, these narcotic fumes, in which there is the height of pain and pleasure and forgetfulness, wreathing, swirling out of the music of Wagner as out of some magic censer, rising to our brain, to numb and intoxicate.

A wonderful power this, on the part of music and musician, and one which quite transcends the mere petty power of giving pleasure to all the older composers, the mere petty power of awakening sympathy of all the dramatists that ever were. But while this performance lasts, and as long as lasts its spell upon our minds, how is it with our soul? Is it, as it would be by some

piece of ordinary music, merely reposed and refreshed in the journey and battle of life? Is it made stronger, keener, and more supple to deal with true and false and right and wrong, as it would be by some written tragedy? I fear not. That passion, without object or motive, blind, if passion ever was, deaf and sterile, communicated to our soul by the mysterious power of Wagner's music, shakes and unsettles it, weakens our mental and moral muscle, making it incapable of resistance in the present, less capable of resistance in the future. If it be true that the dignity of any art in our lives may be measured by the degree to which it increases our power of coping with the difficulties and agitations to which our soul is exposed; may we not ask, if, during the performance of such music, we were suddenly put in presence of some great decision to make, or some great temptation to resist—Should we be more or less fitted to make the right

choice, or take the right course, while our soul was enervated and excited with the empty visions and barren passions with which, like a subtler alcohol, such music had filled it? Let every one answer this question for himself; to me it seems to admit of but one answer.

And, thinking over all this, and reverting to the point from which I started in these most vagabond of musical dissertations, it seems to me, that, although the music of the *Orazi* is quite forgotten of mankind, and although it certainly is very odd to think of such a soprano-singing, minuet-tripping, white-and-faded rose-coloured Roman hero as that Roman hero of 1796; it is, after all, more fine and noble, than trumpery and laughable, to have been able to send into my mind, while the whole passion of *Tristram and Yseult* was overwhelming the hearts of my neighbours, that affectionate and regretful remembrance of Signor Curiazio.

CHRISTKINDCHEN.

CHRISTKINDCHEN.

At the bottom of my heart I believe in it still; in that dear little child with tiny, trotting feet beneath its nightgown, carrying the green fir-tree loaded with gilt nuts, garlands of glass beads, and innumerable tapers, the yellow light of which merges in the pale gold of the halo surrounding the little blond head. I have a sneaking belief in it still, that Baby Christ, Christkindchen as I was taught to call it by my German nurses, who brings presents to good little children — golden apples, gingerbread wrapped in silver foil, strung-up dolls, boxes of leaden soldiers,—doubtless because it remembers, up there in heaven, how pleased it was when the dear

Kings from the East, the nice grandpapa with the snow-white beard, the fair-haired prince who looked like a young lady, and the good nigger smiling with all his thirty-six strong white teeth, brought to the stable at Bethlehem the embroidered garments, the jars of myrrh, the caskets full of frankincense.

I continue to believe in that Christ-kindchen, as people believe in such things as are always expected and yet never come: as the hungry poet believes in immortality while printing verses which no one ever reads; as there believed in the return of her bridegroom that damsel of the fairy tale, going daily to the window and closing it again, saying gently, "He'll come to-morrow," until she grew to be an old, old woman of ninety, and there came to fetch her, no longer the bridegroom, but Death in his grey armour and mounted on his grey horse; I believe in it as I believe in eventual fame and fortune . . . no, I be-

lieve in it only a very little, but I believe in it sincerely.

Towards Christmas there was always heaps of snow. I used to watch it, till my head span, falling in solid flakes, close together and yet each separate, in the white air, always slanting as they came down, as if sown by invisible sowers; the explanation being, as I was informed by my nurse, that the miller and the baker were quarrelling in heaven. On the bank of the ponds the skaters were beginning to cautiously try the ice, putting down gingerly one foot, then the other on that crackling, steelly polish, thinly powdered with white frost; or pitching stones which shattered the middle of the pond, shivering the ice that rebounded in bluish fragments, and sending up, as they flopped in, a spirt of pale-blue water. On the puddles and the gutters the street boys were sliding in long

rows, balancing themselves with their upraised, green-gloved paws. Every now and then came the tinkle of bells, and a sledge passed, rapid and silent like a shadow. There was an unusual splendour in the shop windows of that sleepy German town, particularly the stationers and grocers, on account of the sheets of coloured tissue paper, the gold leaf for gilding the nuts and apples, the strings of blue and red glass beads, the packets of delicately tinted tapers, the candies as hard as quartz, the dried figs and prunes, all to be fastened to the Christmas trees. Every morning there was in the market-place a perfect little wood of dwarf fir-trees, bright green spruce, hard as a blacking brush. All of which things filled my head with confused and delightful expectations.

But there was something more fascinating than any shop window done up for Christmas; more fascinating even than the suggestion, perhaps a trifle too obvious and

material, of those fir-trees in the market-place. In various parts of the town, but more especially within the dark archway of an old tower surrounded by butchers' shops, there were wooden tressels, on which were exhibited rows and rows of wooden Christmas lambs. If ever any animal, born of the fancy of man, has had a power over my mind, it has been neither the dragon, nor the unicorn, nor the rok of "The Arabian Nights," nor the lamia, nor the centaur, nor the snark—although I loved them all—but the white sugar, pink-eyed rabbit, who lays the Easter eggs, and this particular little Christmas lamb. I can see them even now, the beloved creatures, in files on the tressels under the old clock tower; they were twice as long as a child's hand, with a barrel-shaped paunch of thick wool, white and curly, and tied round with strips of red and gold paper; four very short toothpicks served for legs, and they had beautiful, majestic

Roman noses. I can't say wherein consisted precisely the peculiar and exquisite grace, the fascination of those fantastic creatures. Perhaps it was the solid way in which they straddled on those toothpick legs, and the deep, black, fixed stare of the beady eyes on either side of that Roman nose. Certain it is that I was so entranced that my nurse always had to drag me violently along whenever we passed near that clock tower; and I am by no means sure that even now, were I ever to pass that spot at Christmas time, a little compulsion would not be advisable on the part of my companions. . . . Why, I wonder, should it be so much easier to snatch a sight of the Ideal when we are little, when the whole world seems good and beautiful and full of delightful mysteries, than when, as grown up and recognizing that reality is often sad and ugly and always prosaic and limited, we require the Ideal so sorely? 'Tis one of Nature's pieces of injustice,

and not the least of them. We grown-up folks have got our toys: the Venus of Milo, Raphael's Madonnas, the music of Mozart or of Wagner, the whole poetry of the world, from the Vedic hymns to Austin Dobson; heroes and heroines, great men and beautiful women of the Past and the Present; all so much toy-shop stuff, made on purpose to banish weariness and trouble. But, alas, we have no longer the wooden sheep wound round with wool—the Christmas lambs with the toothpick legs and the glass-bead eyes.

Of course there was a deal of talk about Christkindchen during all those days, Christkindchen who would bring the Christmas-tree, if I was a good child.

It was strange how firmly I believed in Christkindchen, although I had sundry reasons for doubting of his existence. During the week before Christmas, for instance,

there was no possibility of going into papa's room, through which I usually careered unimpeded. When he went out, he locked the door and carried off the key in his pocket. When he was in, and I knocked discreetly, he gave a dreadful grunt like an ogre; and showed through the half-closed door (stopping up the rest with his person) an agitated face, and the touzled head of a man who has been stooping over his work, crying out—"What d'you want?" in such a way that I always slunk off, answering stupidly, sucking my thumb, "Nothing, papa." Meanwhile mysterious parcels would arrive, and be engulfed in that mysterious room. Once I looked through the keyhole: a confused greenness, a sheen of gold and glass met my eyes. And sometimes, returning home in the early dusk, I could see, drawn in black upon the white window blind, the outline of a fir-tree, the sharp apex, the majestic triangular sweep of

the branches; and along with this, the outline of my father's face—the nose, the lock of hair which bobbed when he stooped, the points of his moustaches, the fingers twisting something. . . .

Despite all these questionable circumstances, I continued to believe in Christkindchen. Nay, I was distressed in my mind to understand how that dear little Baby Christ could be in so many places at the same time. That it should come to me, and without inconvenience, I understood; for my mother, for fear I should not eat, had particularly begged it to come after supper, instead of coming, as to other houses, before. But how did Christkindchen contrive to appear in such a lot of houses, quite far from one another on the very stroke of six on Christmas Eve? I was much exercised by this theological mystery, while my nurse took me about through the principal streets to see whether, in any of the lit-up ground floor windows,

there were visible fir branches crushed against the panes, lighted tapers, or at least the highest garland of gilded nuts and glass globes, encircling the top of the spruce green pyramid.

For Christkindchen certainly did come. How otherwise would the tree appear suddenly in the nursery, where there had been no tree a minute before? And thinking over the matter only increased the metaphysical difficulty by adding the thought that the visit of Christkindchen was not limited to the houses of one street or even one town, but extended, on the stroke of six, to all the houses in all streets of all the world. Try and grasp that! . . .

"Perhaps there is more than one Christkindchen?" I meditatively propounded.

"You silly!" answered my horrified nurse. "Why how could there be more than one Lord Baby Christ, even if ever so tiny?"

I still continued to believe in Christkindchen, and, after a fashion, I continue to believe in it to this day. The number of Christmases that have gone by since the last one which lit the tapers for me on the bristly fir branches, is a question I don't care to investigate. I am irritated, on the other hand, by the small civilities, the little presents, the bonbons, the Christmas cards, the letters and visits which have come to represent Christmas. There is too little difference between all this and the tips with which depart, doubtless secretly swearing, the baker and butcher's boy, the milkman, the postman, the crossing-sweeper, the smith's assistant, all the creatures who hang on to the housebell at Christmas time.

Yet, for all this, Christmas never comes round without bringing into my mind a vague sort of expectation. Something, I feel, ought to come for me, although I am quite at a loss to say what. And a kind of negative sadness, a very slight heart

tightening, comes over me when Christmas goes by, and, as usual, nothing has come. Some unconscious hope, evidently that after all these years of forgetfulness, Christkindchen will awake to the fact of my existence, and return. . . .

Once, indeed, Christkindchen did return. Christkindchen no longer a tiny child with naked little feet and a white nighty, carrying the fir-tree with its lit tapers, but in the figure of that brother or cousin of Love, of the King Love whom Dante met one day in a light wayfaring garb. Christkindchen masked as that gentle and tranquil genius, wingless and arrowless, who leads by the hand those whom we love at once and shall love for ever ; those for whom this intelligent world has found no name save the same as is given to the bothering creatures who leave visiting cards in the hall and expect to be asked to tea parties.

Yes, it had remembered my existence, that dear little Baby Christ, who under-

stands that we require not merely useful and necessary things, the pots and pans of life, but also superfluities, surprises, presents, embroidered garments, myrrh, incense, friendship, and love. As a result, that vague expectation arising in me with the sound of the bells ringing for Advent grew stronger instead of weaker. Christmas was nearing : a cold, rainy, black Christmas. The air was full of thin rainlike melted ice ; after the late daybreak, the early sunset, there remained among the grey cloud masses a sanguine vapour, a crimson magnificence which was not cheerful, but sad rather and ominous. Again there came to me that confused presentiment that something was about to happen. Without knowing it, I began to hope that as in those far-off days, the door would be thrown open to disclose the white shimmer of Christkindchen.

The door did open ; and there entered Death. Death not dishevelled and tragic,

who knocks you down and leaves you lying stupefied, broken, insensible, so that kind folk gather round and touch you gently and talk with compassionate low voices; but Death letting himself be seen by you only, showing his face and nodding; so that, when you have gulped his icy breath into your lungs, you resume your seat as if nothing had happened, working or amusing yourself, while the smile dies every now and again on your lips, the laugh is suddenly strangled in your throat, when the thought comes home of the one who might have entered any day last week or last month, but who will never, never, never, enter that room again. Death who has carried off some one that was not of your kith and kin, with whom you had no ostensible connection; some one whose loss does not give you a right to bore your surroundings.

I was waiting for Christkindchen, and this other one entered. And yet who knows

whether in reality there was not on this occasion a tacit agreement between the little Christ-child and Death? Who knows whether, during that Christmas, that rainy, black Christmas, with its sanguine after-glows, there did not come to me Christ-kindchen itself, Christkindchen disguised as Death in order to bring me a great solemn gift, the knowledge of my own heart, the love, which is a kind of worship, of such as can feel our love no more?

Unberufen! and I knock three times under the table, as they taught me to, in Germany, to ward off bad luck. So let us talk of things more cheerful, or at least, less melancholy.

Enough has been said, perhaps too much, of all that Christkindchen did for me in those far-distant German days. When I was just issuing out of childhood, it brought me a present more magnificent than any other;

perhaps because, as I was about to quit the class, that of the little ones, with which Christkindchen has most dealings, it thought it kind to send me away with a big *consolation prize*. This prize, this wonderful Christmas box, received by me when I was twelve, consisted in a winter passed in Rome.

It was the last year but one of the Temporal Power. The early winter had been nothing but scirocco, that Roman scirocco which fills the sky with melting, watery clouds, and the streets with greasy, slippery mud; and which, in those days, brought into stronger relief the dirt and squalor of that poor and ill-kept town, Scirocco moreover that filled with sadness my poor little nostalgic soul, dreaming of the blue sky, the snowy mountains, the sparkling sea, the sunshine and palm trees, the cheerful, frivolous life of a little Mediterranean city. I had never before seen any antiquities and museums, and under that funereal sky the galleries struck me

as so many icy catacombs full of dead and petrified people; the temples mere heaps of brickwork, where you could scarcely pick your way for filth and nettles. I was wild, in short, to get away; and this vast Rome did not fascinate my small fancy.

Christmas came on, or rather, Advent. In front of the Propaganda, opposite to which we had a lodging, there began to assemble the big gilded and tasselled coaches of the Eminences, who got out, vermilion like pomegranates, between their liveried lacqueys. At various street corners there started out of the earth penitents belonging to all manner of confraternities, uncanny black and scarlet puppets, with eyes sparkling through the holes of the hood, and money-boxes which they jingled without saying a word. The pork-shops began to be hung with heavy garlands of hams and sausages, replacing flowers among the branches of bay, and the ribbons

and gilt paper. And every morning there rose to my bed, awaking me from some dream of shepherds and kings from the East, the melancholy quavering of the fife, the monotonous drone of the bagpipe. It seemed as if, little by little, all this prosy, every-day world were turning into a confused fairy tale, heard half-way between sleeping and awake.

Then the festivities began. I remember the morning when, in the midst of jangling of bells and banging of artillery, they waked me up by candlelight, and helped me into black clothes belonging to my elders (to wear mourning seemed to me highly dignified), and then carried me, crushed in a two-seat cab, to St. Peter's, where I waited for hours among the knees of veiled and black-dressed ladies; hours that seemed an endless dream under this immense cupola, shimmering blue and white and gold, where the sunbeams, through a haze of incense, struck upon the huge golden letters,

"Tu es Petrus." Endless, endless; until at last there echoed through the vastness of the place the quavering notes of the singers, the shrill blast of the trumpets; and there became visible, moving above the heads, above the sheen of the bayonets and the halberts, the great fans of ostrich feathers, the golden tassels of the gently swaying throne, the white splendour of the pontifical robes and jewels. The trumpets shrilled through the cupola, the incense rose in great blue wreaths. I thought of King Solomon when (as I had read in "The Arabian Nights") he passed in review the legions of angels, of djins, and of fairies, obedient to the power of his ring.

From that moment everything seemed changed. I was wild to be taken to all the ruins, where, among the vine roots and the dry thistle flowers, I hunted for bits of porphyry and *giallo antico*, for scraps of

scarlet and blue plaster hidden under rubbish and weeds. I was wild to be taken into those dark, damp little churches, resplendent with magic garlands and pyramids of lights, and full of the long, sweet, tearful, almost infantine notes of voices, whose strange sweetness seemed to cut into your soul, only to pour into the wound some mysterious narcotic balm. I was wild to be taken to those chilly galleries, where, while the icy water splashed in the shells of the Tritons in the garden, the winter sunshine, white, cold, and brilliant, made the salt-like marble sparkle; and all those gods, all those goddesses, and nymphs, and heroes, all that nude and white and ice-cold world, seemed to seek me with their blank, white glance, smiling with the faint and ironical smile that means—"This creature is ours." And indeed, from that moment, I, poor tiny creature, constituted the most microscopic among the conquests of the world-conquering and heart-subduing city.

And this, this giving me to Rome, or giving Rome to me; this throwing open the doors and displaying, instead of the poor, humdrum fir-tree, strung with gilded nuts and lit up with coloured tapers, that strange, magnificent Christmas gift, that *Bescheerung* (as the Germans say) prepared by all peoples and all centuries—this constituted my last, regular, and authentic relations with the Lord Baby Christ, with Christkindchen who remembers, up there in Heaven, how pleased it was, in the stable of Bethlehem, with the caskets of frankincense, the jars of myrrh, and the golden-bordered garments of the dear kings from the East.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

REVIEWING what I have written to you, my dear Carlo, by way of preface, and what also constitutes the bulk of this heterogeneous volume, it seems to me I may have been unjust, at least in spirit, to the things which I have designated as "Juvenilia."

Art, music, beautiful nature, poetry, and that queer chaos within our souls of fragmentary and mingled impressions whence all things beautiful arise, into which all things beautiful resolve—all this has in reality but one fault: that it is unequally distributed. The pity of it is that we, a small class, monopolize all of such consoling things,

we who need the least consoling in life; that we, having much of everything, should have the whole also of this. The cause of dissatisfaction in many minds, and of a degree even of hostility towards the beautiful uselessnesses of the world, is moreover that these same beautiful uselessnesses which ought in justice to be possessed by all, so often serve to withdraw the attention of those who do possess them (and possess them, as I said, in virtual monopoly), from the necessities of the very creatures who possess in this world nothing save the miserable slightness of their own wants; and who, among other birthrights of mankind, are disinherited also of beauty.

It is the old story of asceticism, which is a very sad story indeed, being that of wastefulness, not only of the gifts of God, but of the precious sense of justice. The old saints were struck with the fact that superabundance of fleshpots made certain people gross and selfish and cruel; and

insufficience of fleshpots made certain others, from necessity, as the first from excess, gross, selfish, and cruel also. The saints were grieved (as the stoics had been grieved before them), and took a spite against the fleshpots in general, those of which there were too many in one place, and those of which there were too few in others. They determined never to touch any more of such themselves, and tried to persuade the world to do alike.

Similarly with beautiful things. There is no doubt that we, privileged people, are given too much of them and give them too much of our attention; but that is not saying that in the world at large there is too much of them or too much attention given thereunto. It is an evil of distribution. And one result, let us hope, of our thinking somewhat of matters less pleasant, may be, in the long run, in the long-expected future, which yet sometimes comes with a rush, that the less selfish

work of the world will be no longer the mere removal of evil, but also the distribution of good; and among various sorts of good, one of the best is beauty. That being the case, Juvenilia might safely engross a large part of our life, once having put such Juvenilia into the lives of others, nay, put into them a period of true youthfulness, of serenity and wholemindedness, which I fear, at present, is as unfairly distributed as art.

Moreover, I am inclined to think that do what we may, we should on no account let the love for mere beauty drop out of our lives, be thrust aside by more serious and generous cares. The love of these Juvenilia means the continuance of youth in ourselves; and although we should not lead a life of unmixed youthfulness, a life without sufficient youthfulness in it is likely to be unprofitable to others as well as to ourselves. After all, the object of all our efforts is merely that other folks' hap-

piness should not be diminished, but rather increased, by our own; and if we torment ourselves too much, fixing our thoughts on only painful subjects, there is no telling but we may get to torment others also; having developed a malignant taste for uncomfortable ideas, like certain bigots of all creeds and absence of creeds, particularly the modern creed of pessimism, to whom the thought of misery becomes as necessary as their dinner or their pipe.

In the words of Wordsworth, and with no baser meaning, besides, "the world is too much with us"—more than is good for us and, in measure, for the world itself. I spoke in the introductory pages of this little book of the days, selfish doubtless, when the questions of art, of beauty, of imagination, the subject matter of these essays, seemed the only ones worth thinking about. There is the possibility of a contrary extreme. I felt it very keenly a little time ago, returning in the autumn weather

to a little Tuscan mountain village which I had not visited for some years, and where I suddenly found myself confronted in a way with a previous and very different myself. "The world is too much with us." Perfectly true. I do not mean by the world the mere trifling interests of social life, the mere sordid consideration of ways and means, though for all of us, after a certain age, these are apt to take a quite needless degree of importance. I mean the hundred interests, persons, places, actions, tendencies, problems, that life forces upon us, that constitute the world, and that come in the line of vision of our seeing and feeling what is beautiful in nature and art. I felt that keenly sitting upon the hillside just outside that Apennine village, looking down between the slopes of chestnuts on the one side, the black and red village roofs among the cypresses on the other, into the valley deep below, spreading itself, like a wide river of yellow haze, to

the feet of the smoke-blue Alps of Modena, while the mountain outlines, from the low wooded hills to the dizzy Carrara crags against the sky, became, as the afternoon advanced, blue and bluer, paler and paler, a pale blue smokiness, fold upon fold, of that particular luminousness which is the supreme and ineffable beauty of the south. I sat there, every green thing that I crushed a scented herb, on a bank above the vineyard and oliveyard, golden and smoke-grey in the low light, with peaceable voices of women and children rising up to me, and the light sound of broken hemp straw. I sat there, in company of my former self, while the mountain ridges grew more and more unsubstantial and luminous under the pale sky, until the sun having set things were reversed, and the sky became pale and diaphanous, the mountains of deeper and deeper solemn hyacinth blue. I sat there, as I said, with my former self, and that line of Wordsworth's kept returning to

my mind. Yes, certainly, the world is too much with us; it interferes with that complete vision of merely simple and pleasant things, that power of being filled with their loveliness, every chink and cranny of our nature safe from the intrusion of baser things. These other things intrude now, get between me sometimes and the fulness of nature and art, or rather make holes in my soul, and let my pleasure, my serenity, ooze and leak out and be wasted. And these are the things of the world, some noble, others futile or even base, all more or less irrelevant to this: problems, difficulties, projects; the thought of the poor and the rich (each equally unnatural and removed from simple enjoyment); of the deadlocks in people's lives, the hopelessness in their character, the hundred little meannesses and dirtinesses which real detail always implies. It is, in fact, the invasion of the human element. But why should the human element jar upon all beauty?

I scarcely know, but I know that it does, my own and other folks. Beauty, whether of nature or of art, is simple, harmonious, complete; the human element, *the world*, full, even at the best, of dissonance, imperfection, complexity, and enigma, that awaken suspicion and evil thoughts, leaving us, even where it shows handsomest, with a notion that under the surface all is far from beautiful, that there are mixtures of motives, and motives and motors hidden away—drains and dustbins of the soul. Contact with the world, knowledge of human nature, brings up with our wonder and admiration at the strange and sometimes admirable mechanism called man, the acquaintance with a deal of what Michelet, speaking of Montaigne (and he might well have applied the expression to his own works), calls *d'abominables viscères.*

It is for this that we feel purer and stronger for a thorough contact with art and with nature regarded from the artistic standpoint;

for a thorough stripping away of the world, of the reality, including all doubts, troubles, suspicions, and other things that chafe and clog and soil our souls, a stripping away occasionally of all the world including ourselves. We feel purer and stronger. But purity and strength are qualities whose very significance depends upon another life besides that of art; of a life dealing with less pleasant things, a life towards which the life of art stands merely as an interval of refreshment and repose. Do you remember the allegorical figure in Siena Cathedral and my theory of *Juvenilia?* The mature man, to preserve his vigour and value, must hunt and hawk, must pursue the useless as well as the useful. But his business lies with the useful, not with the useless, and the falcon on the wrist remains the symbol, not of the full-grown knight or citizen, but of the immature youth.

We have talked, my dear Carlo, a great

deal about art and all beautiful things; talked of them as our business in life. The time will come, I trust, when we shall talk of them, but of other things besides; when we shall take art more lightly because we shall have taken life more seriously; when we shall recognize with gratitude that *Juvenilia* are *Juvenilia;* and that in this fact lies their legitimacy and use.

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